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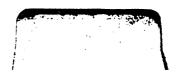
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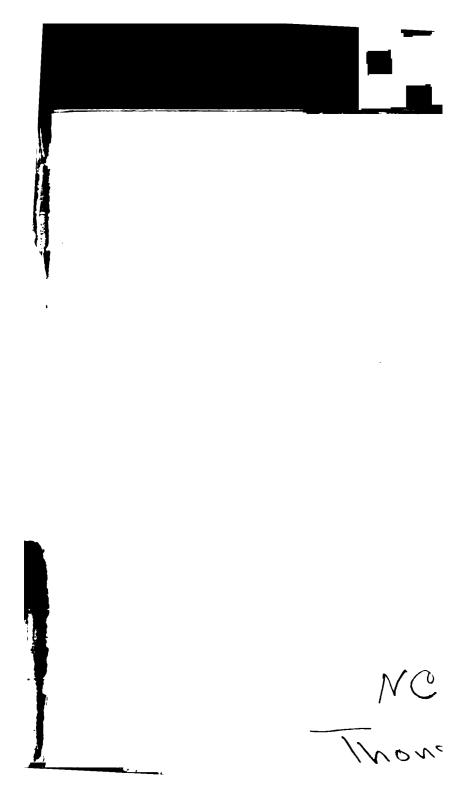
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BY

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LONDON
DIGBY, LONG & CO.
18, Bouverie Street, Fleet Street, E.C
1905

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# Joek and I and the Rydra

#### CHAPTER I

#### WE GO AWAY

The reason we went away at all was 'cause I had been very ill. Not just upset, like headache, or sour plums, —nor even poorly, like mumps and measles, but really ill—very ill.

It began by getting wet through in a bad thunderstorm, and having a long way to walk home in wet clothes. When the doctor came he said it was a chill. I told him I was sure he was mistaken, 'cause I was burning all over like an oven, and felt dried up.

He put his big, cool hand on my head, and said, "Perhaps so, little maid," and looked so kind and sad, that I was sorry for him. It is a drefful thing to make mistakes when one is a doctor. 'Course if one makes mistakes people won't trust one, and won't send for one when their little girls are poorly, and then what is one to do?

But when he came again in the evening I tried to tell him how sorry I was to have been rude, 'cause he was

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right after all, and I was shivery and my teeth chattering so hard they could scarcely speak. The doctor was a nice man, he understood what I was trying to say, and was so kind that I was sorrier than ever to have cont'adicted him. This is a thing one must not do to grown ups. One may be naughty in a good many ways and get off being punished, but one must not cont'adick.

Then things grew worse and worse, First it was so cold I had all the clothes over me, and a hot water bottle, and then so hot I pushed them off and wanted fanning, and by the time mother had settled me and sat down I had to have them on again. And every time I was dreffully 'fraid of her saying, "Dollie, dear, you really must not be changeable. Make up your mind how you will have the things, and stick to it."

So I tried to push them down and pull them up myself, but dear mother was not cross a bit. She said, "What is it, darling? Don't trouble. Mother will do it for you."

That is such a s'prising thing 'bout grown ups. One never knows what they will do. Sometimes when one doesn't think one has been naughty they will be cross as cross, and at others when one knows one is troublesome they don't say a word.

I tried to tell mother I didn't mean to be bad, but 'fore the words would come out to asplain properly I fell asleep. And then I was always falling asleep, and having horrid dreams, and waking to find mother or Cecil sitting near me, and falling asleep again.

And one drefful night, when the dreams had been worse than ever, I woke up and saw they were all in the room. Father and mother were sitting by the bed, and Dick and Cecil were leaning over the bottom of it. Cecil had her face hidden on Dick's shoulder, and—I must have been mistaken, 'cause Dick is quite a grown up, and has a long

moustache, and blue cheeks, and a chin that scrubs when he kisses one,—but it really looked as though there were tears in his eyes.

I was so tired and poorly I couldn't move when mother gave a kind of sob, "My baby! My little Dollie!" and father said, "Hush, dear! Hush!"

I wanted to say something to comfort her, but they all got misty and I fell asleep again, and had no more bad dreams.

When I woke up I was quite s'prised. All the pain had gone, but I couldn't lift my head from the pillow, and my fingers looked like claws, and when I tried to speak such a queer croak came I was 'shamed. Mother came from somewhere, and whispered to me to "Drink this, and go to sleep, darling." I had been sleeping such a lot I should have liked to stay awake, and ask what had been the matter, but it seemed no use till I had more of a voice than that croaky sound. So I did what mother said, and when I had slept, and had things to eat, and slept, and had things to eat for a long time, they told me I had been ill, but now I was better, and must hurry and get well, and we should go to the sea.

But a very sad thing happened. When I was nearly strong enough to go away father was taken ill, and everything had to be put off. Poor father had to go to bed, and the doctor came often again. Mother and Cecil had a great deal to do, and I used to lie on the sofa and read nearly all the day. When Cecil had time she would take me on her lap and tell stories—Cecil tells beaut'ful stories—but she hadn't much time, and my head ached when I read too much, so it was rather lonely.

One day, when the doctor had seen father, he sat down by me, and said, "Why don't you run in the garden and play, little maid?"

I felt shy. Cecil had gone out of the room, and there was no one but just me, all alone. I said I was too tired.

"Too tired?" He looked over his specs in a rather drefful way. "You have no business to be tired at this time in the morning."

I whispered I was always tired, no matter how early it was, and he said, "Humph!" quite loudly. Then he said to himself, "Ought to have a change!" I sat still, till he asked, "Have you no little companions? How would you like me to bring Bessie to play with you?"

This was very uncomferable 'cause Bessie is his little girl, and though we were great friends I didn't want her then, and it would be not perlite to say so. He looked at me so hard that a lump came in my throat, and I was 'fraid of bursting out crying.

He got up, and smiled. "Never mind, Dollie. Bessie shall come when you are better. In the meantime—" and he walked away athout finishing what he was saying.

That evening mother, and Cecil, and Dick were talking. Mother said, "Dollie must have a change the doctor says, and how to manage it I do not know."

I wondered if mother knew I was there. One must never listen to grown ups talking when they do not know one is there. It is naughty. So I gave a little cough. Cecil jumped up, and put a shawl over me, and gave me a kiss, and said, "Are you cold, pet?"

Then she sat down again. It was all right. They did not mind me hearing. Mother went on talking.

"It is out of the question for me to leave your father, and yet Dollie does not gain strength here as she should."

"Can't Cecil take her somewhere?" asked Dick.

"I suppose she could," said mother. "But I don't quite like it. Cecil is so young."

I could scarcely help laughing at mother's funny mistake. 'Course she meant to say 'Dollie.' Cecil young! Why, Cecil is as grown up as mother; her dresses are as long, and her hair is done up on her head. I thought I would tell mother what she had said; but then I thought p'raps better not. When one interrucks, grown ups often say, "Time for bed, Dollie." And the conversation was so int'resting I wanted to hear.

"It would be very dull in lodgings alone," said mother.

"I shouldn't mind that, if it did Dollie good," said Cecil.

Cecil is the sweetest sister poss'ble. I have seen some of the sisters of my friends, and there is not one so good as my Cis. She is so pretty too, with lovely goldy hair, and blue eyes, and her complex'on is just sweet. Fanny Danvers once pointed out her sister, and tried to make me think she was as lovely. But she didn't even compare.

"I have it!" said Dick, slapping his leg so loudly that he made us all jump. "Look here, mother, dear. How will this do? You know Seacomb? A pretty little seaside place, with mountains rising up behind the village. Suppose Cecil goes there. Let me see the timetable. Yes, I thought so. There is a train which would take me over in time for late tea every day. I should have to leave soon after breakfast, and of course Cis would be alone all day, but I should always be there at night, and from Saturday midday till Monday morning, as well. They need not go into lodgings either; there is a Hydro there—"

Dick talked a lot more, but I didn't hear another word, I was terrified. It was cruel to send us to a place where a hydra was kept. I had read 'bout it in one of my books, and had seen a picture of it having a fight with a big man. It had nine heads! Fancy nine heads! A creature which has nine heads must be terrifying. I couldn't go to a place where there was a hydra. I tried hard to 'suade myself mother would never let me go near anything dang'rous, and 'course it would be chained up; but s'pose the chains broke! When a thing has nine heads one can never tell what it will do! It must be able to think so much more than if it had only one. One could never be up to it. I told myself Cecil would keep me safe, and I mustn't be frightened. But p'raps she didn't know what a hydra was. I got hot, and cold, and hot, and cold again; something came buzzing in my head, and then I burst out crying.

In a minute Cecil had me on her lap, and was kissing and petting me. "What is it, Dollie?" she whispered. "Tell me, my baby. Shut the door, Dick. I don't want mother to be made anxious. What is it, pet?"

I hadn't noticed mother had gone away; she must have left the room while I was thinking bout the hydra. I clung tightly round Cecil's neck, and sobbed, "I don't want to go. Let me stay at home, Cecil. I will be good and try to eat more bread and milk. Don't let us go to that drefful place."

"Is that all?" said Cecil laughing. I don't mind Cecil laughing at me. She always sounds as though she were loving me when she laughs in that way. "Little goosey! You will like it. Why, Dollie, you love the sea, and perhaps we can find a donkey, or even a little pony if you are good. Don't cry!"

But I only cried all the more. "Not there, Cis, not there! I should be frightened of the hydra. Please, please go where there isn't one."

Dick is never so patient as Cecil. He said, rather

crossly, "What nonsense! It is the only place near where I could go conveniently. I hope the child isn't going to set her mind against it."

"Don't Dick!" said Cecil. "I'm sure you would be happy, Dollie. We might find some nice little boy or girl to play with you. That would be fine!"

"But not where there is a hydra, Cecil!" I whispered, shaking all over. "I'm so frightened! Not where there is a hydra!"

"Ridiculous!" said Dick quite loudly, but Cecil stopped him.

"Don't, Dick!" she said, again. "Poor little thing! she is excited. Carry her upstairs, and I'll put her to bed. It is past the time, and she is over tired. She will be better in the morning."

Dick lifted me in his strong arms, and carried me to Cecil's room. I had slept with her since father was ill, so that if I had bad dreams I could hold on tightly. He was very kind, but when he put me down he said, "Little goose!" And when Dick says, "Little goose!" it sounds very diffrent to what it does when Cecil says it.

I heard Cecil whisper to him something 'bout "Dreadfully shy," but I didn't know what she meant; and when he went away she undressed me, and wrapped me in a shawl, and coaxed me to eat my bread and milk.

I tried my best, I really did, but how can one eat when one is sobbing all the time, so I said:

"I will to-morrow, Cecil, I truly will; only don't let us go to that drefful place."

Cecil was sweet. She put her arms round me, and let me hide my face against her, and called me her baby—I like Cis to call me that—but she said:

"We must do what mother and the doctor decide, musn't we, dearie? You must be a brave girl, and try

not to be afraid. I will not let any harm happen to you. Now, don't cry any more; go to sleep, and you will feel better to-morrow."

A week after that we were on our way to Seacomb. Cecil had talked to me very ser'usly. "I know you are frightened, Dollie, but you must be a good girl, and try to overcome it. You see, with dear father so ill, we must make the least trouble we can; and Seacomb is more convenient than any other place. It is only a short journey so mother could come over instantly if anything went wrong; and it is the only sea side place where Dick could come to us every night. One must always be brave and do one's duty. You will try, Dollie, will you not?"

Dearest Cecil often asplains things when other people will not, and it is much easier to do things when one knows the reason. I promised to be good, but put my arms round her neck, and whispered:

"Aren't you frightened, Cis?"

Cecil laughed, and her cheeks grew pinky. "I believe I am a little bit, Dollikins, but we mustn't let mother know."

The day we went was very hot; the kind of heat which seems to walt while the train is moving, and as soon as it stops comes down, and wraps one in a blanket till one can hardly breathe. Dick took off his coat, and 'stead of being shocked, Cecil only said, "Lucky boy! I wish we could, too."

It was drefful! The sunshine danced up and down, and a big fly buzzed 'bout, till Dick chased it outside. Cecil tore up a book which she had bought to read, athout looking at a single word, and made it into a fan for me.

"I hope it is not going to be like this, Dick."

"It will be cooler by the sea," said Dick. "Anyhow, it is bound to be better than in a stuffy town. Bear up, Doll, we are nearly there."

I begged Dick to let me hold his watch, and show me where the long hand had to get to, so I could see azactly how long we had to wait, and just as it finished up half an hour the train stopped. Dick said, "Thank goodness!" and helped Cecil out, and then lifted me on to the platform.

When we left the station, and were driving up a hill in an open carriage it was a deal nicer.

"Look through those trees, Cis," said Dick. "That is Sunnyside."

"I wish it were called, "Snowflake," or something refreshing," said Cecil, throwing the book fan away. "I shall be thankful for a cup of tea. How a railway journey parches one in this weather."

Sunnyside was a big house, with a carriage drive through some pretty trees leading up to it. It had lots and lots of windows, and ivy growing all over the front, and round the bit of the side which we could see as we passed.

When we went in there was a crowd of people sitting on the stairs, and standing 'bout, talking, and laughing. They did not stop, but behaved like people do when they want to watch, and don't want anyone to know they are doing it.

Cecil put me on a chair, and gave me her blue parasol with the lace on, to take care of for her. "Wait here, Dollie; we must see about our rooms. I will not be gone long."

It is a very unpleasant feeling when one is left alone in a strange house with people near who one knows are looking at one. I held the parasol fast, and sat straight, and stared hard at the floor. Once when I peeped up to see if Cecil was coming, a big gentleman with black hair, and a black moustache smiled at me; but I didn't like his smile, he looked horrid, so I stared at the floor harder than ever, and tried to keep the tears from squeeging through. It is very bad to be looked at. The people laughed, and I listened to what they were saying.

- "Isn't she a dainty little piece of perfection?" said one gentleman.
- "What dignity!" said another, and they all laughed again.
- "Will you tell me your name, my lady fair?" asked the gentleman with the black moustache.

I wondered who he was speaking to, and peeped up again to see, but he was looking at me in such a horrid way that I held Cecil's parasol tighter, and sat as still as a mouse, growing hotter and hotter.

The people said things.

- "Dear Lady Disdain!"
- "Snub for you, Dalton!"
- "My lady is as unapproachable as she is fair."

It is a very queer thing! Sometimes when grown ups talk one cannot understand a bit what they mean. They laugh as though it were funny, but one cannot see any joke in it.

Most of the people walked away when they had finished laughing, but the black man, who was Mr. Dalton, said, "I shall stop, and get a glimpse of the elder beauty again."

So when they had gone he stood and looked at me till it was hotter than even in the train. It is quite astraordinary how some people's eyes go through and through one, and make one want to cry, and hide one's face on Cecil's shoulder. "Come along, Dollie," said Cecil. "How hot you look, little one."

I slipped off the chair, and held her hand tightly, and tried to make her see Mr. Dalton, but she didn't understand, and only thought I was tired. We were shown into a big room, and Dick said:

"Hurry, Cis, the tea bell will ring soon."

I was so tired and frightened of a lot of people, and p'raps even seeing that nasty Mr. Dalton again, that I began to cry. "I want to go home, Cecil. The people here are rude! I don't want any tea."

"Hang it!" said Dick. "The child is becoming a perfect cry-baby. She weeps at everything. Do stop this nonsense, Dollie, and behave properly."

I only cried harder than ever. It was very naughty, but I couldn't help it. The tears came faster, and faster

Cecil took off my hat, and bathed my face. "Send our tea up here, Dick," she said. "We shall not come down again, to-night."

"Cecil, you give in to that child in everything; you must be firmer. Dollie, if you are so naughty I shall be very angry."

I pressed closer against Cecil, and she put her arm round me.

"Dollie doesn't intend to be naughty," she said, and I loved her for it. "She is poorly, and we must excuse her. She can't possibly come down."

"Then ring for one of the maids to sit with her, and you come."

I squeeged her tighter and tighter. "No, I shall stay with her. Send up tea at once, Dick."

When Cecil speaks like that Dick knows it is no use trying to make her alter her mind. As a rule she gives

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in to Dick a great deal, but sometimes she will not, and then he has to.

He jumped his shoulders up and down. "Well, good night, Doll. I hope you will be in a better temper to-morrow."

He kissed me, and I tried to say I was sorry, but he wouldn't listen.

"If you were really sorry, you would behave better," he said, and shut the door with quite a bang.

I knew why he was angry. He wanted Cecil to go down with him. She is so pretty everyone likes to look at her, and Dick is very proud of her, and likes her to go bout with him.

When he had gone she lifted me on her lap. I thought she would have scolded, and said I really must not cry at everything, and I was too old to be such a baby, but she didn't. She petted me, and put her soft cheek against my head, and began to say how I should like the sea, and what walks we would have up the hills, and the flowers we would gather, and she would buy me a spade, and all kinds of int'resting things like that. And when we had finished tea she put me to bed, and sat telling a story till I fell asleep.

There is one very cur'us thing 'bout Cecil's stories. In the day time they are splendidly int'resting and 'citing, but when I am in bed they are not nearly so good. P'raps she is tired, and can't make up so well; most of her stories are out of her own head. 'Course I never tell her so, and try hard to stay awake, and hear the end, but when they are very unint'resting I am 'fraid I fall asleep. This is not perlite. But dear Cecil is never 'fended.

#### CHAPTER II

## Jock

When I woke the next morning the sun was shining beaut'fully. Cecil had opened the window, and it felt fresh and sweet, so diff'rent from the hot room at home. She was quite dressed, and told me to be quick, as she had let me sleep till the last minute, and if I didn't hurry the breakfast bell would ring 'fore I was ready.

"Have you seen any little girls or boys, Cis?"

"Not yet, dear. We will go into the garden after breakfast, and perhaps shall find some one to play with. Are you ready?"

As we went down stairs I slipped my hand into Cecil's, feeling very shy. There were such a lot of people going to the big room, and they looked at us, and smiled. There were large tables, and people sitting at them, and ladies in white caps hurrying about. If I didn't know that grown ups are never shy I should really have thought that Cecil was, too. She had such a pink colour in her cheeks, and was so glad when she saw Dick. She held my hand very fast, for fear I should be frightened.

Dick lifted me into a chair next to a fat old gentleman

on one side, and Cecil on the other. I azamined the people while the ladies in white caps (Dick said they were waitresses) were bringing the breakfasts. They were all grown ups; not one little girl, 'cept me. Just op'site was a very tall lady with a thin face, and hair brushed straight back, and looking as though she had put a lot of butter on it. She spoke in a loud voice, and the waitress didn't seem to like her. She brought her three platefuls of things, and each time the lady said, "Uneatable!" and "Disgusting!" At last she had something she liked, and then the waitress asked me what I would have.

It is uncomferable when people ask like that, 'cause one doesn't know what there is, and daren't ask, so one has to say, "Nothing, thank you," and hope Cecil will hear, and say, "Oh, but you must, Dollie!" But Cecil was being talked to by a lady. The waitress was a nice one. She leaned down, and spoke in low tones so no one could hear.

- "Would you like a little bacon, or perhaps tongue, there is fish, too. Do you like eggs?"
- "Yes, please," I whispered. It was nice no one could hear.
- "An egg, Miss Dollie?" I don't know how she knew my name. "Are you sure you like an egg the best? Very well!"

So she gave me an egg, and some salt, and a cup of tea, and told me to taste it, and see if it was right. She spoke to another waitress, and they both looked at me, and the new one said, "Isn't it a little sweet!"

It is silly to be shy. Dick says so, and Dick ought to know, specially when people are kind, so I tried to speak up like a little lady. "No, thank you. I like it sweet."

They both laughed, and my waitress said, "That's all right, then."

When they had gone away I hadn't any bread and butter. It is very uncomferable when the bread is just so far away that one dosn't like to reach for it, for fear some one should say "Rude little girl! Why don't you ask?" and just so near that one doesn't like to say, "Please will you pass it," for fear they say, "Why don't you get it yourself, and not bother me."

The fat old gentleman was eating his bacon, and grunting, and Cecil was still talking to the lady so I left the bread and butter alone and began with my egg. As soon as I tapped a hole in it a lot of nasty stuff ran out and made a mess on my plate, and when the top was off all the white wasn't white, but was like water to look at, and when one tried to lift up a spoonful it fell out again, and made the plate messier than ever, I didn't know what to do. I can't bear eggs like that. And everyone was getting on so fast, and I hadn't begun. I was staring at my plate when some one rapped on the table, and there was the thin lady watching me.

She pointed to the egg, and said, "Eat it up, child. Don't be dainty!"

I couldn't eat it, and I daren't say, "No," so what I should have done I don't know, but she had spoken so loudly that all the people were looking, and Cecil too.

Cecil said, "Dear me, Dollie, haven't you begun yet? What an underdone egg! I must get you another."

"Don't spoil the child!" said the lady. "In my young days children were made to eat what was set before them, and not say, 'I'll have this,' and 'I'll not have that.'"

Cecil looked at the egg. "But they are so very nasty when underdone."

Dearest Cecil knows how I hate them.

"You will ruin the child, if you give way to her fancies. My dear parents would as soon have thought of flying as permitting me to refuse good food."

I thought the lady must have altered since she had grown up, but these things cannot be said. Cecil was very uncomferable.

"I suppose you can't eat it, Dollie?"

I knew she wanted me to, 'cause of the thin lady, and I tried to pick up a spoonful, but it wouldn't stay in, and when I got a little I couldn't put it in my mouth. There are some things one can't do, even for Cecil.

Then Dick laughed. "The child can't eat stuff like that, Miss Malinson. There, Dollie! there's another egg for you, and some bread and butter. Eat it up, little woman, or you will keep us waiting."

The thin lady said something about, 'spoiling the child,' again, but I didn't listen. I was too 'fraid they would finish 'fore I had. Cecil waited till I was quite done, and then we went to the front door to wave goodbye to Dick.

He gave me a kiss, and said, "Mind you have a good time, and get well and strong. I shall expect you to be as fat as a pound of butter by the time I come back to tea."

Dick says such funny things. 'Course I was fatter than more than a pound.

It is very lonely when people go away and leave one in a big strange house, with lots of people one doesn't know It was worse for Cecil than for me, 'cause I had her, and she had no one. P'raps grown ups don't mind being left, though I think Cecil must have done, for she looked after Dick till he was out of sight, and then sighed and "This will not do, Dollie. We mustn't mope. Let us put on our hats, and sit in the garden. I don't think we will take a walk this morning; we must wait till you are stronger."

There was a big lawn, with seats round it, and pretty bushes ahind the seats, and little walks which looked as though they led to int'resting places. Cecil sat down on one of the seats which was very long, so that she could put her feet up, and lean back, and there was a little ledge for me. On the lawn were hoops for croquet, and at the other side, knocking a ball about, was a boy.

I pulled Cecil's hand, and she said, "Yes, dear, I see! He seems a very nice boy. Would you like to go and play with him?"

Grown ups are very queer, even the kindest of them. They are so 'barrassing. Fancy walking up to a strange boy, and asking him to play! I said I would rather sit still. It made Cecil think I was tired, and she was anshus. It was a pity; but it is so very difcult to tell things at times. Cecil began to read, and I watched the boy playing. Sometimes he looked at me, and I looked at him, and once or twice he knocked the ball nearly to where we were siting, and when he ran after it he smiled at me. I felt very shy; but I couldn't help smiling back. It must be nice not to be shy. Fanny Danvers doesn't mind people a bit. She can hand things round at her mother's At Home athout growing red, and even 'cites, and sings, and people say, "Little dear!" I wish I could 'cite. I know the pieces as well as Fanny, but when visitors are there my voice will not come out. It is very sad.

At last the boy dropped his mallet, and walked straight across the lawn. I knew he was coming to speak, so pulled Cecil, and she looked up from her book. He came right up to us, and took off his cap.

"Good morning! My name is Jock McKenzie. Will your little girl come and play with me?"

Cecil smiled at him. "She will be very pleased, won't you, Dollie? She has been wanting someone to play with."

Grown ups say such things. But Jock was very nice. He said, "Has she? That is a good thing, 'cause I have too."

"Run along, Dollie, if you are not too tired. I will stay here, and read."

Jock was not shy at all. He began to talk at once. "Are you tired? Shall we sit on the grass, and talk till you are rested? What is your name?"

"Dorothy Sinclair, but everyone calls me Dollie."

"And mine is John, but everyone call me Jock. Are you staying here with your sister? That lady is your sister, isn't she?"

"Yes, my sister Cecil."

Then I told him 'bout my illness, and how dear father was ill now.

He was very int'rested. "I thought p'raps you hadn't a father and mother. I haven't. I have only Alan."

I was sorry. It must be so sad to have no father and mother, but Jock didn't care much.

"They died when I was quite a baby," he asplained.

"And I have Alan. Alan is my brother. He is quite grown up."

"I have a big brother, too," said I. "But I don't love him nearly as much as Cecil."

"I love Alan better than all the rest of the world put together," said Jock.

"Is it nice being here, Jock?"

"Well, it has been rather slow, but it will be better

now. Every body was grown up but just me, and that is not much fun. Alan plays with me sometimes at croquet, but he can give me three quarters of a round, and beat easily. It is not interesting playing with someone who can beat you all the time. Then it is stupid to build castles on the sand by yourself. But now you have come we will have jolly times. Shall we be chums, Dollie? I'll tell you about the people here, and show you the pretty walks, and you beg Miss Cecil to let me come when you go on the beach, and Alan is writing letters. Will you?"

We shook hands, and promised to be true friends as long as we were at Seacomb. As Jock was my chum I told him about Miss Malinson.

"She is horrid, Dollie. She is always saying children are spoilt now-a-days, and her respected parents would never have allowed her to do things like we do. She must have had very nasty parents."

"P'raps she takes after them," I said.

"P'raps so. Anyhow, never ask if you may do things when she is there. She will be sure to persuade Miss Cecil not to let you."

"What do people do here, Jock?"

"Go walks, and boating, and in the afternoon they usually play tennis. Can you play?"

"I can't, but Cecil is a beaut'ful player," I said, proudly. "She won a prize at her Club last year. It was a bracelet, with a monnygram on it. A monnygram means C. S. (that stands for Cecil Sinclair) so twisted about that no one can read it 'less they are shown how, and even then it is difficult. What else do people do?"

"Lots of things. Oh! do you know there is going to be a dance to-night?"

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"Is there? How I wish I could see it! It would be lovely! I wonder if Cis would let me sit up a bit."

"Coax her," said Jock. "Alan says I may if I don't get in anyone's way. But don't say anything about it before Miss Malinson, Dollie, or she will say her parents never allowed her to sit up. Do you feel rested now? Shall we have a game? You can have the blue mallet and ball, and I'll have the red. I'll play first. It doesn't sound very p'lite, but in croquet it is p'liter to go first than second 'cause then you can play with my ball after going through the hoop."

Jock asplained the game. It was intresting, only whenever I hit his ball he made me send it ever so far away, and when he hit mine he didn't knock it worth mentioning. At last I said he wasn't trying, but was letting me win.

"It would be silly for me to try hard when you are only learning, Dollie. When you have practised we will have some good games. Now knock my ball below that hoop—go through yourself. That's right. Now, knock mine again. Good! Try and peg out, and you will have won. Hurray! You really have done awfully well for a beginner."

Jock threw up his cap, and two gentlemen who had come up one of the paths, stopped.

"There's Alan," said Jock. "Come and see him."

I would rather not have done, but Jock had hold of my hand, so I was 'bliged.

"Is that Alan?" I whispered, horrorfied.

It was the man with the black moustaches.

"No, indeed! The other. Alan, this is Dollie."

The other took off his cap as though I had been a grown up lady, and smiled just like Jock did.

- "Good morning, Miss Dollie. Have you had a pleasant game? I saw that you won."
- "Jock let me," I whispered. It wouldn't have been fair to let him think I had done it by myself.
- "How do you do, Dear Lady Disdain?" said Mr. Dalton.

There wasn't any lady near, and he looked as though he were speaking to me. He smiled too, but it wasn't a nice smile like Jock's and Mr. Alan's. I held fast to Jock's hand.

"You have begun early, Jock," he said; "but I admire your taste, young man."

I wish grown ups wouldn't talk so that one cannot understand them. I didn't know what he meant, but it was something that made me hot, and frightened. Jock didn't like it, either. He was red.

Mr. Alan spoke quite crossly, but not as though he was cross with Jock and me. "Shut up, for goodness' sake, Dalton! I'll not have them teased. Jock, take your little friend to her sister, and then come along, old fellow. Good morning, Miss Dollie."

He shook hands with me, and smiled again, and then made a sign to Jock to go. I was glad. That black man was holding out his hand, and saying something about 'stributing favours equally!

- "Isn't he an awful bounder?" whispered Jock, as we ran across the lawn.
  - "What is a bounder, Jock?"

Jock was rather puzzled. "I think it means a disagreeable man. Alan says it."

- "He is a bounder, then," I 'greed.
- "Ask Miss Cecil about sitting up to-night, Dollie. We are going away for the afternoon, but I shall look for you when we come back. Goodbye, Dollie."

"Goodbye, Jock."

He took off his cap perlitely, and ran after Mr. Alan.
"He is a nice boy, Cecil. We are going to be chums,"

"That's right. I'm very glad. Come and sit down now, dear. You must be tired with so much running about."

I 'spose I must have been. At all events I saw Cecil turn over two pages, and then don't 'member anything else till she said, "Wake up, Dollie. It's dinner time."

#### CHAPTER III

## JOCK AND I GIVE AN INTRODUCTION

When dinner was over we had to go out again. Cecil said we must not waste a minute more indoors than could be helped. So we went into the garden, and down the pretty paths, and asked the gardener which was the way to the beach, but Cecil wouldn't go there the first day. She said the garden was large enough. When we had walked till I was tired Cecil said she would sit down, and see the tennis, if we could find the right place. I knew it. Jock had told me. So we went, but no one was there. Cecil began to read again, and I asked if I could go round the corner where there were a lot of daisies and buttercups in a field, and gather some flowers.

It is nice to ask Cecil if one may do things; she nearly always says "Yes." I set to work to pick a lot, and thread them into chains. It took a long time to make enough for Cecil and me as well. Often when one thinks a chain is ready one of the stalks will split, and has to be mended. But at last I had plenty, and put some on my hair, and hung others round my neck, and filled my hat with those for Cecil.

When I came to where I had left Cecil, it was quite diffrent. There were lots and lots of people; some playing at tennis, and the others sitting on chairs, and on the grass, and standing up watching. Cecil was quite in the middle, and there was no way of getting to her. I couldn't walk in front of all those persons 'less Cecil said, "Come along, Dollie;" and she was so int'rested in the game she never saw me. At last I thought I could squeege atween the backs of the chairs and the bushes. It was all right till the last one 'fore Cecil's. I'm 'fraid I did rather knock that. The lady on it was Miss Malinson, and she said: "Really, child, why can't you keep still and not fidget."

I wondered if she always spoke in such loud tones that everybody turned round and listened.

As soon as she saw me she held up her hands as high as her head, and turned up her eyes till one could see nothing but whites.

"The conceit of the child! The conceit of the child!" she said twice. "Fancy decking herself out with flowers like that."

The lady who had talked to Cecil at breakfast,—her name was Mrs. Garland,—said, "Really, Miss Malinson! I cannot see the harm of a child putting on daisies. All children do."

"People are all alike," said Miss Malinson. "Let a child but be pretty, and all her faults are condoned."

She looked at me so hard that I thought she wanted me to answer. I didn't know what condoned meant, but I thought she was cross with me for something, so I got hold of Cecil's arm, and said:

"Mother says no one will love me just for being pretty, 'less I am good too."

Something must have hurt her, she groaned so loud,

and held up her hands, and showed her eyes all white again.

"The injudiciousness of parents of the present day!"

The reason I 'member all these long words is 'cause I have asked Cecil 'bout them when I forgot. I told her I was going to write all that happened while we were at Seacomb, and if she would help me with the hard parts I should be 'bliged. So everything is quite c'rect.

"I cannot conceive how people can be so unwise," she said. "My respected parents would never have dreamt of saying such a thing to me."

"P'raps there was no need," I said, thinking how nice it must be to be always good. I am often naughty, and mother has to talk ser'usly to me.

I don't know how it was but everyone laughed. Not out loud, as they do when it is a joke, but a kind of laugh which one knows is going on inside, and people are trying not to let it come out. The gentlemen pulled hard at their moustaches, and the ladies grew pink all over their cheeks, and talked very fast to each other. Miss Malinson grew pink too, but it was on her nose, not her cheeks, which is not nearly so pretty.

"Rude, ill-mannered child!" she said.

Cecil spoke gravely. "Dollie, I am ashamed of you! You must beg Miss Malinson's pardon instantly."

Cecil is not often 'shamed of me, and when she is I am very, very unhappy. I hadn't 'tended being naughty, but 'course it was a personal remark, and Cecil says personal remarks are always rude. It is very uncomferable to beg pardon instantly with heaps of persons listening; but it is still worse to wait a long time, hoping Cecil will forget, 'cause she will not, and it has to be done in the end. So I whispered, "I am sorry. Please

forgive me!" like mother tells me to do, when I have been naughty.

As a rule when one says that to grown ups they give one a kiss, and say," Never mind, dear," or something like that; but Miss Malinson didn't. She pushed me away.

"You ought to be whipped. That is what would do you good; ill-bred little thing!"

Everyone watched the game again, and talked to each other, but I didn't dare to look up. I knew all the people were thinking, "That is a rude little girl who made a personal remark."

It seemed a long time 'fore Cecil said, "Shall we see if Dick has come yet?"

It was an alief to get away from everybody; but when I peeped at Cecil her face was so grave that I didn't like to say anything. We walked down the pretty path and to the lawn where we had played croquet, and there was Dick, lying on one of the long chairs.

He waved his pipe when he saw us. Cecil sat down by him, and I climbed on his knee.

"Father's better to-day, Cis. I went up at dinnertime. Mother was anxious to hear how we had got on last night. I have had a hard day, and feel awfully done up. How have things gone with you? Have you been a good girl, Dollikins?"

It was most unfort'nate Dick should ask that. Cecil wouldn't have told him; but when he asked 'course I was 'bliged to say straight out that I had been very naughty.

Dick said, "That's bad! State particulars."

I thought he must have taken cold when I came to the end, he had such a bad fit of coughing. But he said no, it was only the smoke had gone the wrong way. It must have been painful. It is bad enough when a crumb goes wrong, and one really wants that to go down, but one doesn't want the smoke. Why is it 'sidered perlite for a grown up gentleman to put a lot of smoke in his mouth, and puff it out again to look at it, and when a little girl takes a sweet out people say, "Dirty child!" Such a lot of things are right for grown ups that are wrong for children.

When Dick was better again, he said, "That was a dreadful speech. What made you say it?"

"I don't know. I thought it was so nice for Miss Malinson never to have to be told to be good, and I never 'membered 'bout it being a personal remark."

Cecil said, "What!" though she tells me it is rude to say it, and the smoke went the wrong way again with Dick.

He didn't scold as I 'spected he would, but began to talk in French to Cecil. When people talk in French it means they don't want one to understand. Even when the French was finished it was such grown up talk that it wasn't int'resting till at last Dick said:

"You must let it alone, Cis. You can hardly tell the party that the child intended no reflection on her lack of beauty."

I noticed that 'cause it 'minded me of the party that night, and I hadn't yet asked Cecil if I could sit up. I didn't want to ask 'fore Dick. He would say. "Nonsense! bed is the best place for little girls."

Cecil stood up. "It seems rather a shame. I might have known better from such a baby. Come along, Dollie, we must dress for tea."

I was as good as gold all the time, and didn't even say a word when Cecil gave such a jerk at my hair that one of the teeth of the comb broke. When we were nearly ready I asked:

"Do you know they are going to have a party, Cis?"
"Yes, dear."

I got hold of her, and hugged her tight. "May I sit up; just for a little, Cis, just for a little, and see the dancing? Do say 'yes' for a tiny short time, dearest, darling Cecil!"

Cecil shook her head. "I'm afraid not, Dollie. If you were stronger I shouldn't mind an extra half hour, but it is your first day here, and I don't want you to be overtired."

- "But, Cecil darling, I slept for quite a long time this morning. Don't you think that could count?"
  - "Well, I'll see what Dick says."
- "Oh, don't! Say 'yes' yourself. Just a short time, and I will go to bed ever so quickly afterwards. Please, please, Cecil. I have never seen a grown up party."
- "Perhaps there will be another later on when you are better, Dollie. Will that do?"
- "Is it a punishment for being naughty, and making a personal remark?" I asked, trying not to cry, I was so dis'pointed.

Cecil gave me a kiss. "No, indeed! I'll tell you what, Dollie. If the dancing begins early you shall stay, but if late you must be good, and not think of it. I will ask at tea time."

- "Oh, I hope it will be early. Shall you put on your party dress, Cis?"
- "No; I don't know anybody to dance with, and Dick is too tired to-night."

All through tea Cecil didn't say a word about staying up, nor afterwards either. I sat as quiet as pos'ble, and read a book, and looked at the people walking up and down the corridor. When one doesn't wish to go to bed it is best to be very good, and quiet, and hope Cecil will for-

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get. I didn't even ask what time the dancing was to begin.

Then a gong sounded, and the dancing room was lit up, and someone began to play the piano. Cecil took my hand, and we went into the room. It is lovely to see a grown up party. The ladies had such pretty dresses. I wished Cecil would have put hers on. When the dancing had been going a little time Jock came in. He looked all round the room till he caught sight of me, and then nodded, and came edging by the wall, and made a bow, and said:

"May I have the pleasure, Dollie?"

"May I, Cis?"

"I fear you will not manage it. You may try if you wish, but only for a short time. You mustn't let her overtire herself, Jock."

"No, Miss Cecil. We will dance for a bit, and then take a stroll in the corridor."

So we went off. But Cecil was right. I soon had enough, so Jock said we would sit it out, and talk.

He offered his arm when we were outside. I felt dreffully shy, but so 'liciously grown up as I took it, and we walked up and down. I tried to p'etend my dress had a train, and held it up like ladies do.

"Why hasn't your Cecil put on a party dress?" asked lock.

"She wouldn't," I said, sorrowfully. "I wish she had done. You have no idea how lovely she is when dressed up. Her arms are so soft, and pretty, and her eyes shine, and she grows pinky. Lovely!"

"I should think so," 'greed Jock. "If only she had come out in her best frock she would have been a regular out and outer, and knocked all the ladies out of time in no time."

It sounded very clever. I was much 'pressed.

Then Jock talked away telling about the 'scursion he had had. At last he said, "Shall we sit down, Dollie? I have something 'portant to say."

I would rather have walked. It feels more grown up to walk. But I wanted to hear what it was, so we sat on one of the big seats that went all round the corridor. Jock doubled up one leg, and sat on it, and picked up a fan, and began fanning so hard that my hair flew 'bout everywhere. It was not comferable, but it was so grown up of Jock that I had to stand it.

- "Dollie, I am very anxious to give Alan a leg up if you are 'greeable."
  - "I don't know what you mean."

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- "You see, it's this way. Alan wants awfully to know your Cecil—to talk to her, and dance, and such things. Not that he is the only one. Mr. Dalton does too, and all the other fellows."
  - "Why doesn't he do it, then?"
- "Dollie!" Jock was 'mazed. I didn't know much.
  "They haven't been interduced. Grown ups can't talk to every one they like as we can. They have to wait till some one interduces them."
  - "What is interduce?" I asked.

Jock was a very clever boy. He knew lots of things which I didn't.

- "It means some one says, 'Miss Cecil, this is Mr. Alan,' and splains who he is, and 'Mr. Alan, this is Miss Cecil,' and splains who she is."
- "But Cecil knows. I told her which was Mr. Alan this morning, and he must know which is Cis, or he wouldn't want to talk to her."
- "That doesn't matter. If they had known each other for years and years, they couldn't talk till someone had said those words."

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"It sounds silly."

"Grown up ways are often silly," said Jock.

This was true. I knew it.

"What do you want to do, then?"

"My idea is that if Alan could get interduced first it would give him a pull over the others. What do you think?"

"I s'pose it would. But who is to do it?"

"Us!" Jock smacked himself on the chest, and patted my arm. "I have thought it out, and this is the way. I know Miss Cecil, and you know Alan. If I said, 'Alan, this is Miss Cecil, Dollie's sister,' couldn't you say, 'Cecil, this is Mr. Alan, Jock's brother'?"

I thought I could, if I wasn't too shy when the time came.

"I would have done it all myself," said Jock, "only course Miss Cecil belongs to you, and I was bound to find out if you were willing first."

I hadn't known that Cecil was so much mine that I could refuse to let her be interduced to anyone. If that was the case I must be very cautious and find out whether Mr. Alan was a good gentleman, and fit for her to know. Cecil was always careful who I played with.

"Is Mr. Alan nice?" I asked.

Jock was 'fended. "Dollie! Why, he's Alan!"

I begged Jock's pardon.

"Why do they all want to know her?"

"'Cause she's pretty. Men always want to know pretty girls."

"Cecil isn't a girl," I said, firing up. "It's a insult, She's a lady."

"All ladies are called girls, no matter how old they are. I heard Mr. Dalton call Miss Malinson an old girl. Cecil is an old girl."

I thinked it over and didn't like it. "She isn't!" I said, crossly. "I won't have her called old. She is a lady; that is what Cecil is. If Mr. Alan calls her an old girl he shall not be interduced. It's rude!"

"He didn't! I never heard him! And it isn't rude, Dollie. It's quite true, but I'll not call her it again if you don't like it. You needn't be angry. I didn't intend to be not p'lite."

Jock was so sorry I was 'bliged to forgive him. It is very easy to say things athout 'tending. Hadn't I made a horrid personal remark only that very afternoon?

- "When is it to be done?" I asked.
- "To-night. If we don't do it to-night it will be no good. By to-morrow, or the next day the others may dodge in, and then Alan's chance would be lost."
- "I will never interduce that hateful Mr. Dalton, Jock. Never!"
- "He could manage some other way. This is how they will work it. They will wait till some of the ladies get to know her, and then ask them. No! it must be done tonight. Just think how disappointed they will be if we don't."
  - "Mr. Alan may, but I don't think Cecil will."
- "Dollie! she will! If you only knew how jolly Alan is you would see for yourself. Wouldn't you be disappointed if you didn't know me?"
- "P'raps I should. But Cecil is grown up, and a lot nicer than I am."
- "And isn't Alan grown up? and he is nicer than me. So that makes it even."

This was true enough, and I 'termined dear Cecil shouldn't be unhappy 'cause she could not know Mr Alan.

- "But will it do, Jock, if we say the words? Oughtn't it to be grown up persons?"
- "I believe it really ought. It is one of those things that people say 'no' to, if you ask them; but if you do it without asking they can't help themselves, and are glad of it afterwards."
  - "How are we to do it?"
- "I don't know," said Jock. He looked worried. "I have tried to think of a way, but can't. Alan says ladies are much cleverer than gentlemen in some things, and I hoped this was one of them. Don't you think, Dollie, you could find out a way?"
- "It would be no good asking Cecil to go to Mr. Alan and let us do it, I'm sure."
- "Neither would Alan go to Miss Cecil, just for me. Think of something else."

I thinked hard. It would be lovely to be able to do something which Jock couldn't. So I hugged my knees, and frowned, then stuck my fingers in my hair like Dick does when he is thinking of things. But no plan would come. I shook my head.

"Oh, do think harder, Dollie."

I thinked harder. Grown ups never know what a lot of trouble childern take in thinking things to please them. Cecil thinked I was 'joying myself, 'stead of trying for a plan so that she wouldn't be dis'pointed. It would be grand if she had to be 'bliged to me. But the plan wouldn't come.

- "Will you have a talk to Alan, and see for yourself how nice he is?"
  - "Where is he?"
  - "Sitting round that corner, reading."
- "Be quiet, Jock. Don't speak a word. I b'lieve I have a plan. Let me think again."

Jock waited. He was red with 'citement.

"Well?" he said, at length. "Well, Dollie, is it coming?"

"Yes! 'Spose we go and talk to Mr. Alan. I will sit with my back to the door, so that when Cecil comes out and beckons I can't see her. Do you ever sit so that you can't see people, Jock, and hope they will not think it worth while to bother to come to you?"

Jock nodded. "Many a time. Go on."

"Well, I can't see her if she beckons, and she will not like to call in a house where she doesn't live, so she will have to come right up to us, and when she does you can say the words at once 'fore she can get away."

"Splendid! That is a good idea! But, Dollie, you will be sure not to be frightened, and forget your part. Think how dreadful it would be if Alan talked away to Miss Cecil, and she couldn't answer a word. It would be very awkward."

I promised to do my best.

We slipped off the seat, and ran down the corridor, and round to where Mr. Alan was reading. He smiled, and shut his book when Jock and I sat down, and didn't even keep his finger in the place which lets one know they are only going to talk a minute, and then go on reading again.

"Well, Jock, you have found your little friend? Have you had a pleasant day, Dollie?"

"Not very," I said shyly.

It is difficult to talk with grown ups, but Mr. Alan was so kind I soon forgot to be 'fraid, and was more anshus than ever for Cecil not to be dis'pointed.

Presently Jock got hot, and nodded to me, and I knew he had peeped, and Cecil was coming. Would things go

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right? I grew nasty and dampy under my hair, and my hands were all shaky.

Cecil came to me, and 'fore she could say a word Jock jumped down and said, "Alan, this is Miss Cecil, Dollie's sister,"

I tried to speak, but my mouth was all dry. If I wasn't quick Cecil wouldn't be able to answer if Mr. Alan said, 'How do you do? I'm pleased to make your 'quaintance, Miss Cecil,' and then what would happen?

Jock said, "Go on, Dollie," in a loud whisper, and I managed to get out, "Cecil, this is Mr. Alan, Jock's brother."

Then we waited. Could they speak, or had it to be done by grown ups? It was all right.

Mr. Alan stood up the second Jock began, and when I had done they both laughed, they were so pleased.

Mr. Alan said, "Our little brother and sister are first-rate friends already."

"Yes," said Cecil. "I am very glad Dollie has found a companion."

It was quite right.

They went on to grown up talk which wasn't int'resting I rather hoped Cecil would talk such a lot she would forget it was time for bed; but she didn't. In a very short while she said, "Come, Dollie, say 'Goodnight'!"

So I shook hands perlitely with Mr. Alan, and Jock walked upstairs with us to our room.

"Didn't we do well?" he whispered. "And won't they be happy! I'm ever so glad you have come, Dollie. We will have some fine games together. P'raps Miss Cecil will let you come to the sea tomorrow, and we'll make a grand castle. That is our room just along this corridor, about six doors from yours. Goodnight!"

As I was going to bed Cecil laughed a good many times

even when what I said was not funny. At last she asked, "Whatever made you do that, Dollie?"

I told her 'bout the gentlemen wanting to know her, and how Jock and I had given Mr. Alan a leg up, so that he should have a pull over the others. Cecil laughed still more, and got very pink.

"What funny things children are!" she said.

I didn't see how, but if dearest Cecil was happy I didn't mind that.

#### CHAPTER IV

### A 'GROWN UP' PLAY

In a few days Jock and I were great chums, and had fine times. When Mr. Alan had business letters to write Jock used to come with us to the beach, or on to the hills, or to play in the garden. We had lots of games of croquet; only when grown ups came to the lawn lock always offered to give up the mallets, and said we would play at something else. Sometimes they said, "Much obliged to you and Dollie, Jock," and we were so proud of 'bliging people that we didn't really mind not playing; and sometimes they said, "Oh, finish first," and then one would say, "I'll back Dollie," and another, "I'll back Jock," and they showed us how to do the strokes. It is wonderful what good strokes one can make when a gentleman says, "Hit just here, Dollie." The ball goes to places where one thinks it wouldn't, and when one thinks one is going to lose the game one wins.

The people were very kind. It was a funny thing, but whenever Cis and I went a walk we always met some of the gentlemen, and they would come with us, or sit down and talk. They gave me chocolates and things, and Cecil heaps of flowers. Mr. Alan and Jock came with us more than anybody. In the evenings sometimes Dick and Mr. Alan went walks. They were great friends; but I knew Mr. Alan liked Cis better than Dick. So did I.

It was nicest when we were in the garden, 'cause then I felt safe. I hadn't forgotten 'bout the hydra, though I had never seen anything of it. 'Course it couldn't be where lots of persons were walking 'bout, but when we were in lonely parts on the hills, or on the beach with no one in sight I used to take tight hold of Cecil's hand, and every time there was a rustle, or a sudden sound it made me jump, and feel hot, and cold. I 'cided to tell Jock some day, but waited till a good chance should come.

One day we were playing on the beach. Jock was splendid for games. He 'vented most 'citing ones. Cecil and Mr. Alan were sitting on the stones. Cecil was sewing, and Mr. Alan was talking. Jock had made up a new game which was called The Wild Sea Rover.

He had his trousers tucked up to the top of his legs, and Cecil had pinned my dress out of the way, so we could run in the sea.

- "I have a sword, Dollie," said Jock. "I will be a Wild Rover, and you shall be the Beautiful Maiden."
  - "What do we do?" I asked.
- "I travel all over the world, and on the stormy main, and have all kinds of 'ventures, and fight savages, and get wrecked, and live on desert islands, and hunt wild animals, and at last come to the mainland where you have been taken prisoner by cannibals, and I fight them all and rescue you."
  - "But what do I do?"
  - "Beautiful Maidens don't do anything. They wait they are rescued by brave Sea Rovers."

This was very jolly for Jock, but my part sounded tame.

"But that is no fun. Why can't I fight the can'bals myself?"

"Maidens don't fight. They couldn't. They sit on the shore and weep till the Rover rescues them, and carries them away, and marries them."

"I might marry the can'bal king, Jock. Then we could hunt. We might fight the Rover, and kill him, and eat him. That would be much better fun than sitting on a shore and weeping till I was rescued."

Jock was quite 'gusted. "You can't marry a cannibal, Dollie. You must wait till I come. I never heard of a Beautiful Maiden marrying a cannibal,"

"I would just as soon marry a can'bal as a Rover. I should be a queen, if I did. But I shouldn't be anything if I only had a Rover."

Jock was so 'gusted that I tried to make a bargain. "Look here, Jock. I don't mind being a Beaut'ful Maiden half the time, if I can be the Wild Rover and rescue you the other half."

"It is impossible, Dollie," said Jock, sadly. "A Rover is bound to be a man."

"We can play he isn't."

"No, we can't. A boy could grow into a Wild Rover, but a girl couldn't, even if she lived to be a hundred."

"I don't see why. Girls would make as good Rovers as men, I'm sure."

"Anyhow, Dollie, a boy could never be a Beautiful Maiden."

"He might play he was."

But Jock wouldn't. So I wouldn't.

I said, "I really can't, Jock. If you will not go shares

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we must have another game. I will not weep all the time."

"You are very mean!" said Jock, "It would be a lovely game."

"Let us ask Cecil and Mr. Alan," I said, running off. Jock followed.

"Mr. Alan," I panted, "can't girls be Wild Rovers?"
Mr. Alan was rather gloomy. Cecil sat up very
straight, and was pink all over, and had her lips pressed
tightly. 'Course I know grown ups never quarrel, or else
I should have thought they had done. P'raps Mr. Alan
wanted her to play something she didn't like.

"What do you mean, Dollie?" asked Mr. Alan smiling. He was always kind and nice to me.

I asplained, and finished up by asking again, "Can't girls be Rovers?"

"I'm afraid not, Dollie. Little girls should be gentle and sweet, and yielding."

"But that is so stupid, Mr. Alan. I wouldn't mind part of the time, but Jock must be gentle, and sweet, and the other thing afterwards."

"Quite so, Dollie!" said Cecil.

"Aren't there any ladies who fight, and have 'ventures and good times, and don't have to be sweet?" I asked anshusly.

Mr. Alan began to laugh, and looked at Cecil. She laughed too.

"Dollie doesn't believe in the restrictions of the sex. Share and share alike is fair, isn't it, my pet?"

Dearest Cecil understood. She wouldn't have liked to weep all the time while some one else had the fun. I sat down on her lap, and squeeged her face in my hands.

"Don't you know any ladies who fight, Cis?"

- "What about the Amazons, Mr. McKenzie?" asked Cecil.
  - "What are Amazons, Cis?"
- "Those will be the ladies for you, Dollie. Of course!" said Mr. Alan. "They are soldiers; very good soldiers, too, I believe, and go to battle, and fight like men.
- "And I never heard of one being sweet, and gentle, and yielding in my life," added Cecil.
  - "Are they as brave as Rovers?"
  - "I should say quite so,"
  - "And don't have to weep?"
  - "I never heard of such a thing."
- "And do they rescue beaut'ful gentlemen from can'bals?"

Mr. Alan began to laugh again. "I don't think they do, Dollie. Without knowing much about them I imagine men are not in their line, except when they kill them.

This sounded much more 'citing than weeping till a Rover came to rescue one, specially when it would have been more fun to be a can'bal queen, and not be rescued at all. My mind was made up. I would be an Amazon.

Jock sighed when I told him so. "I don't think it will be nearly so much fun. I can't fight you, and kill you; it would be mean. You are smaller than I am, and not so strong, and you have no sword."

"P'raps Mr. Alan will lend me his stick, and we can call it a club," I said, running back to ask.

Mr. Alan was quite willing.

Cecil said, "Don't break it, Dollie."

"She can't hurt it; and it would not matter if she could," said Mr. Alan.

I have noticed gentlemen nearly always say, 'It doesn't matter,' if I do anything naughty, and Cecil is there.

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It is very kind of them, but it doesn't do me much good, 'cause Cecil doesn't say so.

The stick was very strong, and had a knob at the end. But though it was longer than Jock's sword still he wouldn't fight.

Then an idea came which made me grow hot and cold, and shaky all in the same minute, and I said,

"Don't let us fight each other, Jock. Let us p'etend to find the hydra, and kill him."

I was so glad to have told some one. It is drefful to have a secret and never be able to talk 'bout it. Jock was a very brave boy. He was not a bit frightened. He asked, "What is a hydra?"

"It is a horrid creature with nine heads, and long necks, and one big body, and it lives in Seacomb. I think in one of those caves by the sea."

"Are you making up, Dollie? It is impossible to have nine heads."

"But it has, Jock. I have seen a picture of it in one of my books, and a man with a name too long for me to read is killing it. I am not making up a bit."

"I don't believe there is such a thing," said Jock, very 'cidedly.

"How could it's picture get in my book if some one hadn't seen it to know what it is like?"

"I don't know. Who told you it lived here?"

"Dick. When we were coming away he said to mother that there was a hydra here."

"But a hydra is the house we live in, Dollie. That was what Mr. Dick meant."

"Why, Jock, you know the house is called Sunny-side."

"Well, it was called a hydra, I'm quite sure. P'raps it was the name before."

"That makes it all the more sure," I said anshusly. "People always call houses after things close by. Our house is called The Elms, 'cause of our trees; and the doctor's is Meadowlands, 'cause of the big meadow ahind; and at the sea last year our lodgings were Seaview, 'cause if you went into the attic, and leaned out a long way you could view the sea. So 'course this house would be called The Hydra, if people knew one lived near."

Jock was quite 'pressed by my argues. "But our old house was 'Gaythorne,'" he said. "And a thorn couldn't possibly be gay, you know, Dollie. It sounds nonsense."

"That is only one," I pointed out.

Jock 'greed.

"But, look here, if the man in the book was killing it we needn't mind. No one would be afraid of a dead hydra."

"But there must be more than one, Jock. It would be sure to have children, and they would take after their father, wouldn't they?"

Jock was 'bliged to 'gree again. We sat still for a long time. It was such an alief to have told some one all 'bout it, that I didn't feel nearly so frightened. At last Jock asked:

"What makes you think it lives by the sea 'stead of in the mountains?"

"'Cause the gentleman who was killing it had nothing on but a pair of bathing drawers. He wouldn't have been dressed like that if he had not been having a swim, would he?"

We had another long talk, then Jock said, "And you think we had better look for the hydra, and kill it? All right. Shall we start now, and 'zamine that first cave? Alan and Miss Cecil wouldn't mind us going as far as that by ourselves."

"Oh no!" I said, in terror. "I didn't mean to look for it really, only to p'etend. We are too little to fight a hydra. Just think, Jock, while we were fighting two of its heads the other seven could be eating us up as easily as anything."

Jock was rather ser'us. He hadn't thought 'bout it so much as I had. And he hadn't seen the drefful picture. In fact I don't think he quite b'lieved in it at all. P'raps if he had he wouldn't have been so eager to hunt for it. Nine heads are a lot to think 'bout.

- "How many bodies has it, Dollie?"
- "Only one."
- "Only one? Then the best thing will be to try and kill the body. If we were to kill one head there would be eight more, but if we killed the body it would all be dead."

Jock is so clever. He thought of things I should never have dreamed 'bout.

"Let's start at once," he said jumping up.

I was quite frightened, but didn't like to say so. 'Sides, as Jock pointed out when he saw I didn't like it, what was the good of being a Rover and an Amazon if we didn't seek for 'ventures. I might just as well be a Beaut'ful Maiden at once. I didn't say this, but I thought it would have been safer if I had 'cided to be the Beaut'ful Maiden. I would even rather have wept than gone hydra hunting. Sometimes it is very nice to have a boy for a chum; but sometimes one almost wishes he were a girl.

When we began to walk to the cave Jock drew his sword, and carried it in his hand, and I held my club tight. I hoped Cecil would call, 'Don't go too far, Dollie,' but she didn't. It is dis'pointing when one wants to be 'bedient, and nobody tells one anything.

"We are walking very slowly," said Jock.

"The stones hurt my feet sometimes," I said, 'membering that one had done when first we started.

"Are you frightened?"

"No-o, no-ot very, Jock." I was trying not to let my voice get shaky.

"I don't believe there is such a creature, you know Dollie; but we can p'etend."

"But I do," I said, sadly.

"I shall ask Alan."

When we nearly arrived even Jock walked slower. He buckled his belt tighter, and azamined his sword.

"I heard something," I whispered, holding fast to my club with one hand, and clinging to Jock with the other. "Didn't you?"

Jock was rather pale as he said, "Yes, something is inside."

"Come away, Jock. See what a long way it is to Cecil. We can hunt the hydra another day when they are closer."

But Jock was much braver than I.

"Dollie, I must go on. Alan would never forgive me if I were a coward. He says, 'Never tell a lie, Jock; never be a coward; and never be unkind to any one weaker than yourself.' Why, he has a beautiful medal for jumping into the sea after a boy who was drowning."

Jock had stood still to tell me this.

"P'raps he would let me see it. I should like to this very minute.'

Jock 'fused to listen. "I'll show it to you some other time, if the hydra doesn't eat us. And I don't believe there is such a thing; I really don't."

It took us longer to go the little distance that was left than to come all the long way from Cecil. I let my club drop into a pool, and we had to wipe it very carefully, and rub off every bit of sand. It would never do to spoil Mr. Alan's stick. Then Jock said his trowsers must be tucked up higher, and it took him ever so long to roll them. But all the time we were getting nearer and nearer, and all the time we heard noises inside. Real noises. Not like what one hears in bed when the gas is low, and Cecil laughs, and says, 'All 'magination, Dollie,' but noises like stones tumbling about. My face got all wet as though it was raining; but it wasn't.

At last we were quite there. We held our weapons fast. Jock said they were weapons, but it means my club and his sword, and we peeped round into the cave. It was very dark after the bright sun, but we could see a long black thing lying on the ground. I would have run, but Jock held me, and looked again. Then he burst out laughing.

"It is Mr. Dalton throwing pebbles about."

I didn't like Mr. Dalton, and never thought I could have been pleased to see him; but I was. He was very cross. He didn't seem to be throwing stones for fun, but just picking them up and throwing them bang against the wall as though it was someone he wanted to hurt. He was thinking so hard he didn't see us at first. When he did, he said, "Hullo!" and stared past us out of the cave as though he aspected some one.

I said, "Cecil isn't here. She is working on the beach."
He jumped up, and walked to the opening, but 'fore he got out stopped, and said quite savagely:

"Is she alone, or is that fellow with her?"

I was too frightened by his cross face to answer.

"There isn't any fellow there," said Jock. "Only just Alan."

Mr. Dalton said, "Confound!" and lay down on the

sand, and began to throw stones harder than ever. It was very puzzling.

Jock stood and looked at him till he said, "When you children have stared sufficiently perhaps you will go."

I should have gone at once, but Jock whispered that as we had come we might as well search the cave properly. So he walked down one side sticking his sword into every hole, and under every rock, and I did the same on the other with my club.

- "What are you doing?" asked Mr. Dalton.
- "Looking for something," said Jock.
- "Something you have lost?"
- "No; something we want to find."
- "I don't want to find it," I said.
- "Neither do I, if it comes to that," said Jock.

Mr. Dalton was angrier then ever; and he really had some cause. It is very agervating when people answer all one asks, and yet one doesn't know at the end any more than one did at the beginning. But 'course we couldn't tell him. He didn't speak again, so we azamined the cave thoroughly, Jock on one side and I on the other, and when we met at the end Jock whispered:

"Not a sign, Amazon!"

And I whispered, "Not the slightest, Rover!"

So he stuck his sword in his belt, and I shouldered my club, and we walked out. As we passed Mr. Dalton he laughed in a nasty kind of way which makes one feel naughty, but he didn't say anything.

It was nice to be in the sunshine again. We walked back much quicker than we had come, but neither of us said a word for ever so long, only I kept looking over my shoulder to be sure the hydra wasn't coming after us.

"Mr. Dalton is horrid!" I said. "He is nearly as bad as a hydra."

Jock threw himself on the shingles, and said eagerly, "He is. Let us have a game with grown ups, Dollie."

"I don't know how. Will they play with us?"

"No, indeed! They don't know anything about it. One can have splendid games. I often make one up, 'cause I have no one else to play with; but it would be greater fun if you played too."

"I don't know how, but I will, if you tell me." I was greatly int'rested. Jock could 'vent such lovely games. He always knew what to do. If ever I said 'What shall we play at next?' he could always tell, and never said 'I don't know. What shall we?' like Fanny Dawson or the Doctor's Bessie did.

"I call it The Grown Up Play," asplained Jock. "Lots of people play it with me, but they don't know they are doing it. Before you came it was very dull, so I had to do the Grown Up Play nearly all the time. I had one game for three days with Miss Malinson. I won, but it was awfully close."

"Oh, do tell me! With Miss Malinson! How citing, Jock!"

"It was exciting. You see this is the way I do it. I arranged it all myself. I p'etended Miss Malinson was a wicked witch who wanted to turn me into an animal, and the way she could do it was if she could manage to speak to me three times in three days she would win, but if I could hinder her the spell would be broken. She sat at our table then, so I had to be very cautious. It didn't matter so much at first 'cause I had three chances, so I wasn't frightened. It was six o'clock one evening when I made it up, and, would you believe it, I never had such bad luck, before seven she had spoken to me twice. Once to say I was noisy 'cause my chair creaked, and then I ran round a corner straight into her, and I don't

know how much she said. So for three days all but one hour I couldn't let her speak once. It was dreadfully dangerous. I never had such a time. I never looked at her at meal times, and I was most careful not to make a mess for fear she should say 'Dirty boy!' I had some narrow escapes. Once at table, when I was hungry and was eating a big dinner, she said to Alan in her loud voice, 'That boy of yours will make himself ill.' I nearly choked, I was so frightened. Another time I was watching a cricket match, and before I knew I heard her round the corner. I hadn't time to get away, so just dived under the seat, and would you believe it, Dollie, she sat down on that seat the whole of the time, and all of the match I could see was between a gentleman's legs, and I couldn't cheer a bit. I had to go without breakfast one day. I had come down late,-Alan said I was so tired after a long walk he wouldn't wake me, -and there was Miss Malinson, the only one at the table. I begged a large piece of bread and butter from the waitress, and eat it out of doors. But the worst time of all was Alan's fault. Miss Malinson said, 'Dear me! I have left my work in the house,' and Alan said, 'Run and get it, Jock.' I bolted at once for fear she should tell me where it was. Fortunately I knew where she had been sitting, I had to know always so as to escape, and brought it back. I thought I was done for. I should have liked to ask some one else to give it to her, but Alan would have said it was rude. So I made up my mind to lose. But I didn't. Not a bit of it! She snatched the bag from me, and said to the lady who was talking to her, 'I'll be bound my needles are pulled out, or my wool tangled. That's the worst of boys!' I didn't wait for more. I ran. I was very glad when the three days were up. Wasn't it a squeak?"

Jock rubbed his face which was all red with 'citement. I was nearly as hot.

- "What a splendid game! Tell me 'bout another, Jock; have you ever played another?"
- "Lots! I haven't many boys to play with, and never a girl before, so I was 'bliged to use grown ups."
- "What would have happened if Miss Malinson had won?"
- "Nothing, really. Nothing ever happens in games when the other side wins, but I should have lost, you know. I hate losing, specially in a Grown Up Play, 'cause the other side doesn't even know it wins. I don't like losing in draughts or cricket, or—or anything—but that is different. You see, if I am playing with you, Dollie, I am glad for you to win, even if I am sorry for me to lose; but in a Grown Up Play I lose, and it is no good being glad for the others 'cause they don't know."
  - "Tell me another," I begged.
- "I don't always do fairy tales," said Jock. He was glad I liked his play. "You must never tell anybody, Dollie. It has always been a secret. Promise."
  - "I never will, 'less you give leave," I promised.
- "Once I thought I would make Alan say, 'Thank you,' fifty times in one week. I always have a time for the Grown Up Play. It makes it much more exciting, and one has to work harder. I had awful luck that time. The day I began and before he had said it once he told me he had to go away, and wouldn't be back till the day before the time was up. I had only that night, and one nigh when he came home again to do it in. I don't think I ever worked harder. I had to watch him all the time to see if he wanted anything, to get his pipe, and a match, and take his letters to the post, and offer him

things at table, and put his boots away, and bring his shoes, and find his book."

"Did you manage?"

"No," said Jock. He gave such a big sigh. "I worked it up to thirty, but there wasn't enough time. I couldn't think of a single other thing to do."

"I would love to play. Let us have one now. How can we do it? You do have lovely games, Jock."

"It was you who put it into my head this time by saying Mr. Dalton was as bad as a hydra. Shall we have a fairy tale?"

I hugged my knees, and nodded. How won'erful it would be to act a fairy tale all to oneself, and no one know anything about it. This was better than castles, or paddling, or even croquet, and we should be able to do those as well, though the fairy tale would be going on all the time. Jock was a marvelling boy. I waited while he thinked.

"Miss Cecil must be a beautiful princess."

I nodded again. How lovely to have one's own sister a beaut'ful princess in a fairy tale.

"Mr. Dalton shall be the enemy; and we are her guard of honour."

"Oh, do asplain, Jock. What have we to do? what is a guard of honour?"

"It means we are to take care of her. We must always know where she is, and what she is doing, and be ready to obey instantly whatever she commands. The Enemy wants to do her some great harm, so we must never let them be alone together. He can't do it so long as her guard are near. She has another enemy too, a hydra, who will eat her, if it has the chance; we must seek everywhere for the hydra, and kill it. Miss Malinson shall be a witch again, and she must not be left alone

with the Princess either. If the Enemy or the Witch can talk to her alone once they will carry her away where we shall never see her again, and we shall be faithless guards."

"Couldn't we leave the hydra out of the game?" I felt truly uneasy. "Nothing really would happen if we did make a mistake against Mr Dalton and Miss Malinson—"

"The Enemy and the Witch," said Jock. "You mustn't use their names. They aren't Mr. Dalton and Miss Malinson any longer."

"All right. But 'bout the hydra, Jock. You see the hydra is real."

"All the better. It will be more fun to have a real danger, 'stead of all being make believe."

Fun! But Jock had never seen the picture.

"'Sides you know, if it is real we must protect her anyhow. What else is there? We ought to have some one on our side. There are three enemies, and we are only two."

"Have a Queen Mother." I was glad to show I understood fairy tales too. "Mrs. Garland who sits op'site us at the table is very kind. She often talks with Cecil—I mean the Princess."

"That will do. So when she is with the Queen Mother she is safe."

"What about a Prince?"

"We will not bother about a Prince. The Princess is always in trouble before the Prince comes to rescue her, and we will not allow our Princess to be hurt. Now for how long is it to be, Dollie? We must have a time, or there is no end to the game. Shall we say a week? It will be pretty hard with three against us."

I 'greed.

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"We must have a pass word too."

"'Course. So if you meet me anywhere you will say it, so as to be sure it is me, and not anyone else."

"That's it, Dollie. You will play the game well. Let us have a good word. It is a fighting game this time, so it ought to be a fighting word."

"How would 'Hunters' do, Jock, if we must hunt the hydra?"

"Splendid! 'Hunters' shall be the first word; what shall be for the second? We must have another, 'cause if we said 'Hunters' to anyone and they said 'Hunters' too, we should be 'bliged to think he was one of the guard. I have it! The answer shall be 'Slayers.' We'll slay that hydra, Dollie. I say to you, 'Hunters,' and you say, 'And Slayers.'"

I very much wished Jock wouldn't play 'bout the hydra, but I was 'fraid he would think me a coward if I 'jected, so I had to 'gree. Just then Mr. Alan whistled for us to go home.

Jock said, "Listen! what is that?"

I was s'prised he didn't know, and was going to tell him, but he held up his hand.

"It is the Princess wishing for her guard of honour. Come, Amazon."

We marched over the sand, and over the shingle, Jock carrying his sword in his hand, and I holding my club on my shoulder. All the way home we tramped ahead, keeping a careful watch for the Enemy and the hydra. I wondered what Cecil would say if she knew she was a beaut'ful Princess, and we were her guard of honour.

All the way, too, I tried to make up my mind 'bout something, but I couldn't. Sometimes one can make up one's mind in a minute, and at others as soon as one

thinks it is made up it unmakes itself, and one has to begin again. That was the way it was with me till we reached Sunnyside, and Cecil went in. Then I made it up once more, and 'fore it had time to unmake I asked Mr. Alan was there ever such a thing as a hydra.

Jock was sticking his sword in his belt, but he stopped and listened, My heart was thumping very loud, I was so 'fraid of Mr. Alan laughing.

"Oh yes, Dollie. There was a hydra right enough. Who has been telling you about it?"

"Nobody; I saw its picture. Had it—had it nine heads, Mr. Alan?"

"I believe nine was the number. Horrible creature, wasn't it, Dollie? It was a fabulous monster, you know."

The dinner bell rang, and he went in, and Jock looked at me. I didn't say, 'I told you so!' When a person says, 'I told you so,' it makes one cross, and uncomferable inside, and one wants to thump them, or say something rude. Jock was a very nice boy. Quite of his own accord he said:

"I beg your pardon, Dollie. I was wrong. What does fabulous mean?"

"I don't quite know. I think it must be dang'rous. You know, Jock, a monster with nine heads is bound to be very fabulous."

#### CHAPTER V

#### ALFRED

Now that we knew the hydra was real Jock said we must be more careful than ever. I begged him to leave it out of the game as 'maginary dangers were so much more int'resting. Jock said he thought so too, but if unfort'nately a real danger came we mustn't avoid it. He said a boy who had a brother who had won a medal for saving a boy from drowning must never be a coward. We never went out of the grounds athout our weapons Jock offered to lend me another sword like his, but I p'eferred my club. When one has a sword one has to be quite close to the thing one is fighting, but when one has a club one can stand a long way off, and hit it with the nob. It is as well to think of these kind of things when one hunts a hydra.

Every morning, as soon as I came out of our bedroom, Jock would run down the corridor, and whisper, "Hunters!" and I said, "And Slayers!" and he said, "How goes it with the Princess, Amazon?" and I said, "The Princess is well, Rover, and is doing her hair."

At first I couldn't think how to pertect the Princess

when we had gone to bed, but Jock said that was all right. When we went to bed we were off duty, and it didn't matter what happened; we had nothing to do with that. It was a great alief. There was one thing that was very awkward, and made me feel quite 'ceitful. lock said that a guard of honour must 'bey the Princess instantly whatever they were doing, and whatever she said. When I was in the middle of a game, and the Princess said, "Will you do something for me, Dollie?" I had to do it at once. I couldn't say, "May I finish this, Cecil?" 'cause Jock said it would be a great vantage to the Enemy if the guard were faithless. 'Course I didn't mind doing what dear Cecil wished, but the thing was that she didn't understand. When she kissed me and said, "I am writing to mother, and saying what a good obedient little girl my Dollie is," it made me very queer indeed. 'Cause I wasn't really a 'bedient. only she was the Princess, and I was the guard. I couldn't tell her, and it makes one uncomferable when people praise one, and it is not c'rect. So I asked, "Does it matter why I bey, Cecil, so long as I do?" And Cecil said, "Not a bit! If you love me, and do what I say, I don't want anything else." I was happy again then, and put my arms round her neck, and gave her a big squeege, and said, "I do love you. Cecil. better than anyone," and she gave me a kiss, and said, "That's right, my baby."

Jock said she was such a sweet Princess it was a pleasure to 'bey and pertect her, and we must be more on guard than ever. I didn't mind seeking the hydra in the grounds, 'cause I knew it couldn't be there, but it wasn't so nice on the hills, and was horrid on the beach. Jock said if I didn't like the game we would stop it at the end of the week, but we had said a week, and must

play fair till then. He never gave in over a Grown Up Play. But I did like the game, all but the hydra part. It was fun to know one was in a fairy tale all the time, and to have to 'port to Jock whenever we met, and to hide round corners, and watch the Enemy and the Witch, and to warn the Princess when they were coming; and when we specially wanted to leave, and Mr. Dalton would stay and talk, to ask Cecil if she wouldn't come and sit near us, and then choose a seat where Mrs. Garland was, so we could leave in safety. And to think no one knew anything about it!

One day Jock and I were playing croquet. The Princess was writing letters in our room so we could go out in safety. We were more than half way through the game when a boy came and stood on the path, and watched us. Jock never minded people looking on, but it always made me frightened, and I played badly. He didn't say anything for some time, only laughed when we made mistakes, till I had to do a very dif cult stroke. Mr. Alan had shown me one day. The two balls were put close together, and then one knocked them quite in a diffrent way to what one wished them to go, and my ball ought to run through its hoop, and Jock's to roll away. Jock put the balls right for me, and the boy came close. It made me shy, and I must have knocked it on the wrong side, for Jock's ball went through, and mine went away.

The boy clapped his hands, and burst out laughing. "Oh, what a stroke! she sends the wrong ball through the hoop. What a stroke! There's a nice player for you! What a stroke! what a stroke!"

I got hot and shaky, and Jock clenched his fists. "Shut up!" he said angrily, "or I'll make you. Never mind, Dollie, anyone could have an accident. Here are the balls. Try again."

I took hold of the mallet and tried, but the balls were all misty, and I could hardly see, and 'stead of going through both went in the wrong place this time.

The boy laughed louder than ever. "What a stroke! You can't play. Here, give me the mallet. I'll show you."

You'll do nothing of the kind," said Jock firing up. "Leave us alone, we are not playing with you."

"No; you're playing with a girl who sends the wrong ball through the hoop, and tries again when she misses. What a stroke! See me do it! Give me the mallet."

He snatched it away, put the balls together, gave them a knock, and my ball ran through, and Jock's out of the way just as I wanted them to do 'fore.

"Look at that!" he boasted. "I can play, I can. Come and have a game with me, Jock. Don't they call you Jock? Let her go. What's the good of playing with a girl?"

Jock grew very pale. "Put that mallet down. Do you hear what I say?"

"I shan't! I'll have a game with you."

Jock clenched his fists again, and walked right close to the boy. "Put it down."

He looked so fierce that I was terrified, and caught hold of his arm.

"Oh, don't, Jock! don't fight! I don't want to play any more. You play with him."

"Let go, Dollie. I don't want to fight, but he must give up that mallet. Which is it to be, boy?"

The boy threw it on the ground, saying sulkily, "I'm sure I don't want to fight. And my name is Alfred Delancy, not boy."

"Pity your manners aren't as fine as your name," said

Jock, picking up the mallet, and offering it to me. "Come along, Dollie, let us finish our game."

But I ran away, and sat down on the side of the lawn. "I can't play any more, Jock."

Jock pulled out his hankershiff, and dried my eyes. "Don't cry. He's a beast! Never mind him. I'm put the balls right again, or, I'll tell you what, we'll play you have been through that hoop. Come along."

I shook my head. "No, I don't want to play. You go and beat him, Jock. I should love to see him beaten."

- "I don't think I could. He really made a splendid stroke, though he is a beast. Do play, Dollie."
  - "No, not now. I couldn't, Jock."
- "Come and have a game," shouted Alfred. "She won't play, and she can't if she would. I'm a splendid player, I am. Beat father the other day, I did."
  - "I expect he let you," said Jock.
- "He did nothing of the kind. He did his best, but had to say it was no use playing against a fellow like me."
  - "He can't be much of a player, then."
- "Yes, he is; he's a good player, but I beat him. I can beat all the boys near us. You're afraid. That's why you won't play."
  - "Do go, Jock," I whispered. "Try and win him."
- "I don't think I can, Dollie; but if you're sure you will not come I'll try, if you like. Only he'll boast so dreadfully if he does."

Jock picked up his mallet, and Alfred said, "You begin."

- "Not I. If you are such a wonderful player we'll toss for first."
  - " I always play second."

"I dare say you do; but you won't this time, unless the toss says so."

"I won't toss."

"Then Dollie and I will play at something else-Dollie will toss for us. I have a penny."

"A penny!" boasted Alfred. "I have a shilling. I'll toss myself. If Dollie does it she will say you have it. Heads you play first, tails I do. Heads it is! You begin."

Jock looked very doubtful. "I didn't see it. Are you fair? However, here goes! It's not worth making a fuss."

It was a 'citing game. Alfred really played very well. He made some beaut'ful shots, but I kept whispering inside, "I hope Jock will win, I hope Jock will win." Whenever he hit Jock's ball he sent it quite to the other side of the lawn, and he was half way round 'fore Jock was through the second hoop. He kept saying, "You can't play. See me do it." And the worst of it was he did do it. At last Jock had a chance. He hit Alfred's ball, but 'stead of sending it far away he just gave the least tap. I was s'prised.

"What a stroke," shouted Alfred.

"It will do for me," said Jock sending his ball through the hoop with a very gentle stroke, 'stead of a hard bang which would have taken him nearly to the next one. Then he turned back, and hit Alfred's ball again.

A gentleman on the side walk called out, "Well done, Jock! That's what I call playing with your head."

I didn't know what he meant, but Jock must have done something clever. Then he hit both balls to the next hoop, went through himself, and acshally got another hit off Alfred's ball 'fore he finished. The game grew 'citing. Alfred made one or two bad strokes, and lost his

temper. It is a queer thing, but if one loses one's temper one never does anything well. Jock never gets cross over games, he says it's no use. I know it is not, but I'm 'fraid I do all the same. At last when the game was nearly over Jock's ball was ever so far away, and Alfred only had to peg out.

He missed, and said crossly, "It's your turn, but you might as well give in. I can't miss next time."

Jock took no notice, only gave a big hit; the ball came came flying down banged against the side of the last hoop and ran through.

Cecil had just come for me to go out, but she stopped to see the end.

She laughed. "That was a lucky one, Jock."

"Wasn't it!" said Jock. "I wasn't aiming for the hoop at all."

"It isn't fair," shouted Alfred.

"Yes, it is. It was luck, but it is fair. I have another stroke. Hullo! touched it. That's game!"

Jock threw up his hat, and I danced, I was so glad. "Hurray! Hurray! Jock's won."

- "You cheated!" yelled Alfred. "'Tisn't fair."
- "What do you say?" asked Jock, doubling his fists.
- "Well—I mean—it was only luck. I'll play you another. You can't beat me again."
- "Shan't try, at present," said Jock. "Are you going for a walk Miss Cecil?"
- "Yes. How would you like a donkey ride, Dollie? You have not had one yet."
- "Oh, I should!" I said, clasping Cecil's hand. "How good of you, Cis!"
  - "Donkey ride!" said Alfred. "I'll come too."
- "You will do nothing of the kind!" said Cecil, quite werely. "You will wait till you are asked."

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"No, I shan't!" said Alfred. "I shall come. The donkeys don't belong to you. I shall get my hat."

"You will not come with me," said Cecil.

"I shall! I've got the money. You can't hinder me! I shall get a whip, and you'll see how I make the donkey go."

He ran away, and Cecil asked, "Who is that rude boy, Dollie?"

"It's Alfred Delancy," asplained Jock. "May I come, Miss Cecil? Do let me! Alan is writing and has to see a man afterwards. He said I might go with him, but I would rather have a donkey ride. Do let me come!"

Cecil thought for a little, and I was very much 'fraid she would say 'No,' but presently she said:

"You must ask your brother first."

"Can I go with him and ask, Cecil? I want to speak to Mr. Alan."

Again Cecil thinked 'fore letting me go, but at last told us to be quick.

"Alan is in the writing room," said Jock, as we rushed off. "I hope he will let me come with you. Give me your hand, Dollie. Can you run faster? Here we are!".

He banged open the door shouting, "Alan, may I go with Miss Cecil and Dollie-"

Mr. Alan held up his hand, "Steady, old boy! What does it say on that card?"

We looked at it, and read, "You are requested not to talk in this room."

"Come here, and say quietly what you want," said Mr. Alan.

Jock asplained, and Mr. Alan shook his head. "I am afraid you are a great bother to Miss Sinclair. You always want to be with her."

"Not more than you do, Alan," said Jock.

Mr. Alan got rather red, and looked hard at Jock. Then he laughed, and put his hand on his shoulder.

"You are sure she is willing to take you? And you are a good lad, and give no trouble? All right, old chap."

"Mr. Alan, may I have my club?" I asked, forgetting all 'bout the card, and speaking quite loud.

"Dollie is growing warlike," said Mr. Dalton, suddenly twisting round a big arm chair. I hadn't seen him 'fore, and he made me jump. "Whom do you intend to carry captive to your bow and spear this time, Dollie?"

I hadn't any bow or spear, but Mr. Dalfon was always saying queer things which made one uncomferable. I don't know why he was so unkind. I had never done anything to him.

Mr. Alan put his arm round me, and drew me close, and spoke so low that no one but Jock could hear.

"What club is it, Dollie? I have no club."

"Your walking stick, I mean,—with the big nob," whispered.

"That is your club, is it? Yes, you can have it. Jock knows where to find it. But you are not going to beat your poor donkey with a stick like that, are you?"

"Oh no!" I was quite shocked. "I wouldn't hit a donkey for anything. I want it to play with."

"All right. Off you go,-but quietly."

"Here, stop a minute, children," said Mr. Dalton, speaking quite loud in spite of the card. "Which way are you going?"

I wished I dared refuse to tell. It would spoil all the fun if he came. But while I was trying to think of a perlite way Jock spoke:

"I don't know. We might go the front way-or perhaps the back would be shorter, eh, Dollie?—I'll tell

you what, the side door would take us through the fields. Come on, Dollie."

When we were out of the room Jock stopped to give a dance and laugh to himself. "He'll not make much out of that answer, will he, Dollie? Run as fast as you can to the Princess; ask her to go the front way. I'll get the weapons, and catch you up like a shot."

Cecil was quite willing to go which ever way I pleased, and walked slowly along reading her book till Jock came rushing after us.

"He's coming, Dollie," he said, in a loud whisper.

Cecil could not have been much int'rested in her book. She shut it up at once, and asked, "Who is coming, Jock?"

- "Mr Dalton."
- "Did you tell him where we were going?"
- "No; he asked me, but I wouldn't say."

We were walking down a lane with hedges on each side; every now and then there were spaces which led into the fields on the other side. Cecil looked carefully all round, took a little run, climbed up the bank, pushed through a gap, and knelt down ahind the hedge. Jock and I scrambled after and lay down flat, peeping through. We heard a tramp up the lane, and Mr. Dalton came past, walking very quickly. Cecil grew pink, and held up her finger, and no one made the least noise. We waited till he was out of sight, and then Jock whispered:

"I'll run along, and see which way he goes, Miss Cecil."

Cecil nodded. Jock pulled out his sword, and ran by the hedge, taking care not to be seen.

Cecil said, "I'm afraid this is a very bad example for you, Dollie."

"Hiding from people, do you mean, Cis? Is it one of

#### **ALFRED**

those things which are right for grown ups, and wrong for childern to do?"

Cecil laughed. "Don't cultivate a spirit of sarcasm, Dollie."

- "Oh, don't, Cecil!" I begged. "Don't! That is just like Mr. Dalton. You wouldn't like to know people were laughing at you, and when they told you why you didn't know any more than you did 'fore."
  - "No, I shouldn't, pet. Well, Jock?"
  - "He has gone up the road to the beach, Miss Cecil."
- "Very good. Then, as we want to go on the one to the town, we had better start."

I whispered to Jock had he told Cecil that she was a Princess, and Mr. Dalton the Enemy, 'cause it was very queer that she should have run away like that. But Jock said 'no,' and it showed how we were right.

It was not very far to the donkeys. They were beauties, and it took us a long time 'fore we could 'cide which one we would have, but at last Jock 'cided on a dark one, and I on a light. Cecil would not ride. She said she was too old. I hope I shall never feel too old to go on a donkey. It is lovely, if the boy doesn't hit it and make it go too fast. Jock liked to run, but I didn't; it was too shaky.

"Do you see those tents, Dollie?" asked Jock as we jogged along. "There is going to be a fair there. Have you ever been to one? It is such fun! There are horses which go round—whirligigs, you know—and bicycles, and switchbacks, and toboggans, and lions which let men put their heads in their mouths, and tigers which jump, and gipsys who tell fortunes. Fine! Wouldn't you like to go?"

"I shouldn't like to see a man's head inside a lion's mouth."

"It's a tame one, Dollie. It wouldn't bite."

"S'pose it shut it's mouth by accident, athout meaning to be nasty, just 'cause it was tired of holding it open, what would happen then?"

Jock didn't know. "I should like to have my fortune told," he said. It is always better to talk of something else when one doesn't know an answer. "It would be jolly to know what is going to happen when I grow up. I wonder if I shall have 'ventures, or go across seas."

" I don't want to go across seas."

"Would you like to know if you are going to marry a prince?"

"I'm not going to marry anyone. I should be frightened to go away from mother and Cecil. No, I don't want my fortune told, but I should like to go on the horses, and see some other things in the fair. Jock, where is the donkey boy? I am sure our donkeys have eaten enough grass, and mine will not move."

"Nor mine," said Jock kicking, and hitting it with his sword. "Hi! can't you make him go?"

The boy shouted, and the donkeys walked along again. When I was used to the moving we had some races, but Jock always won. I didn't mind. Then they walked into the sea, and mine wanted to lie down, but the boy dragged its head till he got it out again.

Cecil called out. "Have you had enough, Dollie? It is nearly time to go back. Ride to the stand, and get off."

When we had finished patting the donkeys, and giving them a little more to eat we ran back, and found Mrs. Garland and Miss Malinson talking with Cecil. As we reached them Cecil said:

"Thank you, Mrs. Garland. It is very kind of you. Dollie, Mrs. Garland has asked us to a picnic on the hills

on Saturday, when Dick can come with us. Won't it be fun?"

I had never been to a picnic, and felt very happy, but only whispered, "Yes," and got hot.

Miss Malinson said, sharply, "Where are your manners? Can't you say, 'Thank you,' ungrateful little thing?"

I grew hotter than ever, and said, "Thank you," and wished I were like Fanny Danvers. She doesn't mind people at all, and can say perlite things just like a grown up, and people whisper, 'Nice little girl.' When I try to say nice things something comes in my throat, and thumps there like my heart does after I have been running, and it won't let the words out. But I didn't want Mrs. Garland to think I was an ungrateful little thing. She was very kind. I liked her. So when Miss Malinson was talking to Cecil and not looking at me, I got hold of her hand.

Mrs. Garland knelt down and put her arm round me. "Never mind, Dollie. I have a little daughter at home, and know all about little girls, and what they want to say. You will like to come to my picnic, will you not?"

So I gave Mrs. Garland a kiss, and whispered that I should, very much.

Jock was looking very dolefully at us. Mrs. Garland said, "What is the matter, Jock?"

"Nothing!" said lock, with a very big sigh.

Mrs. Garland laughed at him. One does not mind some people laughing at one, and other people one minds very much. Mrs. Garland was the kind one does not mind. She said, "I intend to ask somebody's big brother when I get back."

Jock grew red with pleasure. He was not shy. "Do

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you? How very jolly! Thank you! It is kind! I am sure Alan will come. Thank you! What fun!"

He got hold of her other hand, and gave it a squeege. Mrs. Garland smiled. "It would never do to take your little friend away for half a day, and leave you behind, would it? You would have nobody to play with but the new boy. Is he a nice one, Jock?"

"I don't know, I don't think so. But I would rather play with Dollie; we are chums. It is good of you to ask me. Hurrah!"

"Do be quiet, boy!" said Miss Malinson crossly.
"Can't you say 'thank you,' without making such a noise?"

Jock begged pardon like a gentleman, and Mrs. Garland told us to run away and play. I hoped Miss Malinson was not invited, but I was afraid she was. Cecil says it it is not perlite to ask some one to a party 'fore another some one whom one doesn't 'tend to ask, and once when I was cross with Fanny Danvers and asked the doctor's Bessie to tea 'fore her to make her angry, Cecil said, 'And Fanny too, of course.' And Fanny came. I told Cecil I didn't want her, but Cecil talked to me so gravely 'bout being rude that I was quite sorry, and gave Fanny all my best toys to play with when he came.

#### CHAPTER VI

#### ALFRED DOES A DREADFUL THING

It is a very peculiar thing. Sometimes everything goes right. One can hand cups of tea and cakes at mother's At Home athout dropping them, and go out of rooms athout banging the door, and play in the garden athout dirtying one's frock, and find things for Cecil in her drawers athout turning everything topsy turvy. And other times everything goes wrong. One breaks things, and makes noises, and gets in people's way, till Dick says, 'Really, Dollie, I think you must be trying how naughty you can be!' This isn't so. I never try to be naughty. There is no need to try. The naughtiness comes of its own accord, and nothing one can do makes it go. Even when I am dis'bedient it is not 'cause I want to be bad, but 'cause I wish so very much to do the things which people have said 'mustn't' 'bout.

One of these horrid, naughty, accident times happened soon after Alfred came.

On Saturday morning, as we were running upstairs after breakfast, Alfred caught hold of the back of my dress and pulled it till the gathers came out. Cecil took hold of my

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hand and led me into the bedroom. Then she took off my frock, and said:

" I am getting tired of this state of things, Dollie."

She held up another frock, and pointed to a big brown mark. "What is this?"

- "Alfred threw some water over me 'cause I wouldn't play at drowning sailors. But it was quite clean sea, Cecil."
- "The result on the frock is not clean, is it? How did it become brown?"
  - "I fell down in the sand while it was wet."
- "That means Alfred pushed you, I suppose. And Alfred sent your hat floating on the water, and threw stones at it till it sank."
- "Jock and I threw stones as well, Cis. It sailed so beaut'fully, you can't think, and Alfred said sea water never spoiled things."
  - "And Alfred pulled your hair till you cried."
  - "Jock fought him for that. His eye is black yet."
- "And Alfred knocked you down, and you tore a big hole in your stocking."
- "Jock hit him. He howled, and said he was killed."
- "And Alfred persuaded you to go to the beach when I had not told you that you might."
- "He didn't 'suade so very hard, Cis. I wanted to go. I'm sorry I was naughty."
- "In fact I'm getting about tired of Alfred. He is a naughty, rude, disobedient boy. But that I don't see very well how you can help it, I should forbid your playing with him."

I sighed deeply. When grown ups begin to tell one of everything one has done naughty it is very trying. They 'member so well. Sometimes they say their

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mem'ries are bad, but it never makes them forget any of the bad things one has done.

"Now, Dollie, I shall have to put on the blue dress you are to wear this afternoon. I am very sorry. I didn't want to do so till dinner time, but this last accident has left me no choice. Now, remember, until mother sends more frocks you have nothing else, so if you mess it or tear it this morning you cannot go to the picnic. I cannot possibly take a little ragged muffin with me. So mind what I say, and be careful."

"Oh, Cecil!" I said anshusly. "It is very dang'rous. Couldn't I wear another one so as to run no risks?"

"Which will you wear? This—with the brown mess, or this—with a big hole, or this—with a green stain, of the one with the gathers out?"

There was not much choice. I looked at them very sadly. "Don't you think, darling Cecil—would it be much trouble—to mend one? I would get your workbox, and hold the cotton for you. I should be so dreffully dis'-pointed not to go. Don't you think you could, dearest, darling Cecil?"

Cecil sighed. "I suppose I could, but it will be a long business, and I don't like mending, Dollie. Still—I shouldn't like you to miss the picnic. Well, well, bring me the frock."

Cecil began to work. I sat on the floor at her feet, and found her scissors, and broke the cotton, and tried to be useful. One must always try to do things when grown ups are working for one. If one gets a book or a game they will throw the work down, and say, 'I think p'raps I won't do it,' or 'some other day.'

"I don't think Alfred is a nice boy," said Cecil. "I wish he would go away. If you were not an obedient little girl I think I should have to go home."

Cecil didn't know she was a Princess, and I was bound to 'bey her.

- "I don't like him much. But he is very brave, Cecil. You don't know how brave he is."
- "How?" asked Cecil, holding out her cotton for me to cut. "I should have thought him rather a coward."
- "He is, 'bout some things. But he is brave too. He doesn't care a bit what his father and mother say. If they tell him not to do anything, and he wants to, he just does it athout minding."
  - "I call that naughty, not brave!" said Cecil, severely.
- "But it is brave too, Cis. He says they never punish him. Sometimes his father wants to, but his mother cries so much that he never does. It seems rather silly of her. He doesn't do what they tell him not on the sly, either; he says right out, 'I shall,' and does it while they are looking at him."
- "But, Dollie, if they never punish him, and he knows they will not, how is it brave to do what they forbid? Of what is there to be afraid?"
- I had never thought of this 'fore, and felt rather puzzled. No, it didn't sound brave, after all. "They might, you know, Cis."
- "If they did, probably he would not disobey," said Cecil.
  - "Do you really think it isn't brave?"
- "It is not brave at all. It is very cowardly. It is always cowardly to do things to hurt people. Do you call it brave of a boy to make his mother cry so that he shall not be punished? I hope my little Dollie will never think it brave to disobey me."
- "I never will, Cis," I promised eagerly, getting up to clasp my arms round her neck. "Neither will Jock. He says when a boy has a brother who has saved some-

one's life he is proud to do what he is told, and so ought a girl to be when her sister is such a lovely lady. Is it nice to be a lovely lady, and have lots of gentlemen to talk to, Cis?"

Cecil laughed, and gave me a kiss, and said, "Your dress is finished. Now put it on, and run out to play. Where is Jock?"

- "Playing croquet."
- "You are fond of croquet, are you not, dearie?"
- "Yes, it is a beaut'ful game. Jock says I am 'proving. Thank you so much, Cis, darling. I will try not to have any more accidents. Have you to write a letter 'fore you come out?"

I ran to the garden. I was afraid that they would have begun athout me, but it is better to miss a game than run any chance of spoiling one's last clean frock, and having to stay at home from a picnic.

It was just as I aspected, but they were nearly at the end, and Jock shouted: "Shan't be long, Dollie. Alfred will do it in about two more strokes."

I sat down, but there were two gentlemen and two ladies waiting, so I knew we couldn't have another game.

As soon as Alfred had won, Jock came running across the lawn with his mallet, but one of the gentlemen said.

- "Hullo, Jock! finished? We want the things now." Jock held out the mallet at once.
- "I didn't know you were waiting, Mr. Franklin. I'm awfully sorry. Have we been long?"
- "Not very, old boy. We didn't mind. Pity you didn't win, Jock. I'm afraid the other chap's a bit too strong."
  - "Come on," shouted Alfred. "Let's play again."

- "Can't!" shouted Jock. "Mr. Franklin wants the lawn."
- "Then he can't have it," said Alfred. "We got it first, and the croquet things too. I'm not going to give it up for anybody."

I never heard anything like it! Fancy speaking like that 'bout grown ups! Mr. Franklin looked rather 'stonished. "Aren't you, young man! We'll soon see about that. Jock, run over, and get his mallet for me, there's a good lad!"

Jock ran off immejitly, and I followed.

- "Shan't!" said Alfred.
- "Don't be a donkey!" said Jock. "We have had one game. People always give up after one game."
- "Well, I shan't! Do you think he would give up to me?"
  - "Dare say not. You are only a kid."
- "Then I shan't give up to him. If you weren't a coward you wouldn't either. Get your mallet again, and come on."

Jock laughed. "You'll find it difficult. They have begun to play. Don't be an ass, Alfred!"

- "I'll soon make them go," boasted Alfred. "See me do it! I got the ground."
  - "What is he going to do, Jock?" I asked.
- "Don't know; he'll get us into trouble some day, Dollie. I wish he hadn't come."

Affred marched right up to where they were playing.

"Glad you've come to your senses, my lad," said Mr. Franklin holding out his hand.

Alfred walked past him to one of the ladies' balls which she had sent through a hoop, and knocked it to the other side of the lawn.

Jock gave a low whistle. "Now he'll catch it!"

Mr. Franklin caught hold of his collar, and gave him a shake. "Give me that mallet, and get off the ground, and don't attempt to touch one of those balls again."

"Shan't!" yelled Alfred. "Get off yourself! Let me go! You are a coward, and a bully."

"Am I? It strikes me you require to be taught manners. Now, do you intend to give it up peaceably, or shall I take it from you?"

Alfred clutched tighter than ever, but Mr. Franklin took hold of it and jerked it out of his hand. "Now go, and don't let me see you again in a hurry."

'Stead of 'beying Alfred threw himself on him kicking and hitting. Mr. Franklin held him off easily 'nough until he managed to wriggle round, and then—

"He's biting, Jock!" I whispered. "Biting like a dog! Isn't it awful?"

He really was! He had his teeth right in Mr. Franklin's hand.

Mr. Franklin shook him off, and held up his hand which was all bleeding. Then he said, "You little savage!" and picking him up again by his collar carried him across the lawn, and tried to put him on the walk. But Alfred wouldn't stand. He doubled up his legs, and struggled and fought. So Mr. Franklin dropped him and said, "Lie down then if you wish, you little brute!"

He wrapped a han'kershiff round his hand, and was going away when Alfred began to yell. I never heard such a noise. He shrieked louder and louder every minute. People came running from all parts of the garden to know what was the matter. Windows were opened in a hurry, and they shouted, "Who's being killed?" There was a crowd round all at once. Jock and I rushed across, but we were too late to get in front, so we climbed on a seat, and looked over the heads. Alfred was lying

on the ground kicking and screaming dreffully. Cecil came flying out of the house athout her hat, and with her indoor shoes on. She put her arm round me, and said,

" My pet, I made sure it was you."

I don't see how she could have done. I couldn't have made such a noise as that for anything, but when people are frightened p'raps they don't hear very astinctly. Mr. Alan jumped out of a window. He was very white. He nodded to Jock, "Hullo, old fellow!" then he came and stood by us.

Mrs. Delancy came running along. She was a very stout lady. Cecil says it is perliter to say stout than fat, but truly she was fatter than stout. I did not think she could have run so fast. Her face was red, and she breathed very loudly. The crowd made room for her to pass through, and she sat right down on the path and cried.

"Oh Alfie, my precious Alfie, what is the matter! Who has been hurting you?"

He yelled louder than 'fore. I don't know how he managed to keep it up. "That man!" he screamed, pointing to Mr. Franklin. "He took the croquet away! He knocked me down! He hit me! Oh-o-o-o-o!"

"Can't he tell stories!" whispered Jock.

"The cruel wretch!" Mrs. Delancy sobbed with loud sobs. "Tell me where it hurts, precious! Will no one go for a doctor?"

"I think," said Mr. Alan to Cecil, "there is no need. If there be a doctor within a mile he will hear. Do you know what is the matter, Jock?"

Jock told, and all the time Alfred screamed.

"Poor Franklin!" said Mr. Alan.

I felt very sorry for Mr. Franklin. One feels very comferable when one has hurt anybody, and a lot of

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people are saying, 'Poor child!' and frowning at one. I didn't think grown ups would care 'bout a thing like that, but Mr. Franklin looked so hot that I am 'fraid he did. The people began to put their hands to their ears, and some of them said 'The child must be injured internally.'

"I wish he would stop that noise," said Cecil. "Children know how to manage each other. Couldn't you and Jock do something, Dollie?"

"I know how to do it, Cecil, but I don't like."

"Tell me," said Jock. "I will."

So I whispered, and Jock burst out laughing. "That'll do it, Dollie."

He jumped down from the seat, and pushed his way through the crowd, and gave a little kick at Alfred's foot to make him look. Then he began to sing,

"Cry, baby, cry
Put a little finger in your eye."

Alfred stopped as though he had been shot, and sat up. "Shut up!" he roared.

"Did a likkle boy c'y for his mammy 'cause a naughty genklemun wouldn't let him play c'oquet?" said Jock, crying hard into his hankershiff, but keeping one eye on Alfred "It was a naughty genklemun, it was! A likkle mammy's boy s'ould—"

Jock stopped, and jumped. Alfred scrambled to his feet, and rushed at him. I looked at Cecil. Grown ups are very queer. One never knows what they will do next. As a rule Cecil says it is very unkind to sing 'Cry, baby, cry!' when anyone is doing so; but now she was laughing, and saying, "Well done, Jock!"

All the other people began to laugh too. They said, "The little beggar was shamming."

A big man with a black beard and specs, said, "I am

a doctor. My advice is give him a big dose of the birch tree."

Mrs. Delancy got up, and pulled Alfred's hand. "Come in, you naughty boy!"

He looked back, and made faces at Jock, but Jock only p'etended that his hankershiff was so full of tears he had to squeege it 'fore he could cry any more.

When the people had gone Mr. Franklin came to Jock and held out his hand. "Jock, old man, I am eternally obliged to you. That was about the hottest time I have ever had."

Jock said, "Dollie thought of it."

It was truly gen'rous of him to tell that. Mr. Franklin shook hands with me too, and said:

"Then I am eternally obliged to Dollie. I tell you what, on Monday we will go to the bazaar, and you shall both choose any toy you like in the place."

Jock and I said, "Oh, thank you!"

I wondered if Cecil would let me go. She is very 'ticlar about my taking presents, but she only laughed, and said, "I think they deserve them, Mr. Franklin. They got you out of an exceedingly awkward position."

"I don't think I was ever so uncomfortable before."

"Is your hand very sore, Mr. Franklin?" I asked.

"Pretty middling, Dollie. I shall bear the mark as long as I live, I expect. Little brute! Shall we go on with our game now, ladies?

"I must finish my letter," said Cecil. "I dropped it and ran when I heard the noise."

"So did I," said Mr. Alan.

They went away together, and Jock whispered, "Come and sit on the grass, Dollie, and let us decide what we will choose. Isn't it grand? What do you think of a train that runs by steam?"

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- "Or a musical box, Jock. I have always wanted a musical box."
  - "There is a splendid fort, and soldiers, and cannon."
  - "Would you call a book a toy, Jock?"
- "I think so. There are books there. I should like a cricket set."
- "Oh, I'd rather have a race game than a book, though."

  "If we chose a racquet each, we could play tennis,
  Dollie."

There were such lots of things. We kept choosing one, and then 'ciding we liked something better for ever so long. At last we thought it might be safer to wait nd see. P'raps there might be something there we had never seen 'fore, or had forgotten.

- "Don't you wish Monday would come?" I asked.
- "Not till this afternoon is over. I like picnics."

I had forgotten 'bout the picnic. One does forget things when one is thinking hard 'bout something else. But I was glad Jock had 'minded me. Presently he wanted to go to the beach, but Cecil had told me not to tire myself, as we might have a long walk in the afternoon, so I said 'no,' and he wouldn't go by himself. After a while Alfred came out again. I was rather frightened and asked Jock what he thought he would do to him for teasing.

- "Nothing. He knows better. He knows I could lick him if we fought."
  - "But he might bite," I said anshusly.
  - "Not he!"

Alfred was not cross. He came and sat by us and talked. He had a box of chocolates and was eating them as fast as he could, but he never gave one to Jock or me. It is rude to eat sweets 'fore people and never even offer them a taste. I wished he would, so I could say, 'No,

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thank you,' and let him know I didn't want his old chocolates. He was not a bit 'shamed of the fuss he had made, and began to talk 'bout it at once.

"What do you think of that?" he asked, putting three in his mouth at once, and talking with it full. "I guess they will not interfere with me again. People hate a scene. They will not take the croquet from me in the future.

"No, they won't!" said Jock, "'cause why? you'll never have the chance of getting it again. I heard one of the gentlemen say to Mr. Franklin, 'Mind you lock up the things when you have finished, and take the key into the office. We can't risk an affair like this every time we want to play.' So all you have done by your cleverness, Mr. Alfred, is to hinder us ever having another gaine."

"I shall ask for the key at the office."

"They'll not give it to you. It isn't meant for children, but when there was only me here Alan asked if I might play if I would give up as soon as grown ups wanted to."

"Mother will get it for me."

"I guess she won't. Everybody knows she doesn't play. And you were a donkey to fight Mr. Franklin. He is awfully jolly. Some of the people take the ground straight away, but he always says, 'Finish your game first, old boy,' 'less you are quite at the beginning."

"He has invited Jock and me to the bazaar on Monday, and we are to choose anything we like," I added.

Alfred began to be cross. "I don't care! Mother will give me anything I like, so it will be just as good."

"But it won't be like going down with grown ups," said Jock. "I have been before, and know. It's such fun! They invite people, and a lot go together. They

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go to the Café first, and have coffee and cake, and let me have lemonade 'cause I don't like coffee, and there is a big sweet shop, and the gentlemen buy the ladies chocolates, and some one says. 'Boys like sweets as well as ladies, don't they, Jock," and gets me a box full. And then we go a walk, and sit on the grass when we are tired, and tell funny stories, and ask riddles, and play games. Oh, it's fine, I can tell you! What's going down with a mother alone!"

"Why didn't you tell me he was nice?" said Alfred.

"I never thought of it. I didn't know what you were going to do. And it isn't only Mr. Franklin. Most of the people are nice 'cept just one or two that we know, eh, Dollie?"

"Well, I don't care. I won't have anyone interfering with me. I shan't stop and play as you are nasty. I shall go to mother, and get her to buy me sweets, and lemonade, and things so there!"

Cecil came out with her work. Jock wanted me to have a game, but I whispered to him that I must sit quiet, or Cecil would 'member to put me to bed. Mother always sends me to bed in the day when I am going to anything nice in the evening. It is very dis'greable. 'Course I can't go to sleep when the sun is shining, so all I can do is to be quiet, and 'cide when I am a grown up and have a little girl she shall never go to bed in the day time, and she shall sit up till nine o'clock every night. Cecil says she will be a very poorly and cross little girl if she does, but I think I shall try it.

So Jock and I played cat's cradle, and noughts and crosses, and other best frock games till dinnertime. These are very tame, but very safe.

#### CHAPTER VII

#### WE GO TO THE PICNIC

"Are we going now, Cecil?" I asked, the minute dinner was over.

"Not this very second," said Cecil, laughing. "We want a little time to digest, and rest. You may play with Jock till we are ready, but don't leave the house, and I should advise you to keep as far away from Alfred as possible."

It is very cur'us that so many grown ups who have nobody to say 'must lie down' to them, seem to like to have a nap after dinner. I can't understand it. And I don't know what they mean by 'gesting. When my dinner is eaten it doesn't bother me any more. I am ready to play and do things. But they are not. It is great waste of time. 'Course they have a great deal more time to waste than childern,; they can do what they like all the day, and nobody says 'don't,' and they stay up late at night. Cis says I am mistaken, and shall find it out when I am a grown up myself; but I don't think I shall. It must be nice to be grown up. If Cecil were to tear every frock she has no one would tell her she couldn't go to a picnic.

So Jock and I hung about, (this is not real hanging; it is what Dick says when there is nothing 'ticlar to do, and one is doing it) till Mrs. Garland came running down stairs. She stopped when she saw us, and held out a jug.

"Jock, I should be much obliged if you would get that filled with milk for me. Bring it to my room, will you? Dollie, how would you like to come and help?"

I followed her, and when Jock came back, carrying the milk very carefully, we were busy, I don't know how Mrs. Garland would have managed athout Jock and me. We had to work hard wrapping things up, and packing them away in baskets and bags, and if it hadn't been for me she would have forgotten the sugar altogether. I felt very proud when she said; "That's a thoughtful child! Dear me! I'm afraid the tea wouldn't have been much enjoyed without it."

It is very 'greeable to be called a thoughtful child, and have Mrs. Garland give one a kiss.

At last when all was ready the party came. The gentlemen picked up the baskets, and spirit lamp, and bottles of water to make tea, and all the other things. There was a beaut'ful little tablecloth with crotchet all round, and a big G for Mrs. Garland in the corner, which she begged Mr. Alan to be very careful with, so he put it in his pocket.

When everything was c'lected we started. Alfred came to the door to see us off, and made faces at Jock and me; but we didn't take any notice. Jock said he was dis'pointed not to come, and p'raps it alieved him to do that. It is an alief I know.

As soon as we were outside the gate we left the road and went up the hill side. All the gentlemen and ladies walked along the little paths or close to them, but Jock

and I raced up and down, and stayed ahind to pick flowers, and cut off corners to catch up with the others. The paths were hard and stony, but the grass was soft and felt like velvet in some parts.

"What do people at picnics do, Jock?"

"It depends on the kind of picnic. If it is a big one they go off in the morning in carriages and busses, and visit some old abbey or waterfall, and have dinner out of doors. This one is what they call an afternoon tea picnic—just a small affair, you know—we shall go up the hills till we come to some place which Mrs. Garland knows, and then sit down and have the tea, and talk or play games till it is time to go back.

"Will they let us play?"

"Sometimes they do, if the games are easy, but very often they are not int'resting. Grown up games have not much fun in them. If they have those kind to-day we will go off by ourselves, and seek for 'ventures."

"Jock," I said, very slowly, "it sounds rude, I know, and I don't want to be rude, but that Princess play does not do much, does it?"

"It doesn't!" said Jock straight out. "That is the worst of the grown up plays. One can never tell whether they will be gloriously exciting, or turn out dead failures. You have to take your chance. I thought the Princess would have been much more fun, but we have had no difficulty at all. There is no fun 'less it's difficult. But we have had lots of other games besides, you know, Dollie; it isn't as though we had been 'bliged to play at nothing else. And anyhow we have done our share. It isn't our fault if the Enemy and the Witch and the hydra haven't bothered Miss Cecil. I wouldn't be a bit s'prised if it would have been a lot more difficult if we

had sat up at nights. I b'lieve the Enemy takes 'vantage as soon as we are off duty."

"But we can't do anything then, Jock. We haven't had anything much to do for a long time."

"We'll spend some of this afternoon in looking for the hydra," said Jock. "We haven't been to this part of the country before."

I rather wished I hadn't said anything, for though I began to have doubts as to whether the hydra had not gone quite away, and anyhow I never had thought it so likely to be on the hills as near the sea, still it was nasty to seek for him anywhere.

"Let us give up the Princess game and 'vent another, Jock,—one that will be more fun."

Jock shook his head. "We must play it out, Dollie, even if there shouldn't be a scrap of fun in it. I have played games which were horribly stupid right to the end. I never give it up. Why, just as we gave up something might happen, and all the fun begin, and then what would you think? Even if it doesn't it isn't right to stop doing a thing you have said you would do, 'cause it isn't int'resting. It is not hon'rubble."

"What does hon'rubble mean?" I was much 'pressed by the long word, and Jock being so grave. 'Sides I wanted to get his thoughts away from the hydra, though it wouldn't be much use, 'cause Jock always 'membered things, and came back to them again, even when we had been talking 'bout something else a long time.

Jock thinked. "I b'lieve it means when a boy or a girl means to be straightforward, and do what is right, and above all never tell lies. There shall be no holes in my house, Dollie," he said quite proudly.

"I don't know what you mean. What are holes in a house?"

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"It's a tale—don't you know it? My teacher told it. I love tales. It is so much easier to do things when you are playing a tale."

"Tell it to me. I love tales too. Do tell, Jock."

Jock is always willing to tell things. He never says, 'Oh, I don't like,' or 'It's nothing,' like I do when I am shy, and people want me to asplain.

"I can't tell it like the teacher did, 'cause I only heard it once, and don't 'member everything; but I'll tell what I do. It's a—it's a—what do you call those tales that talk about one thing, and mean another? Do you know?"

"Yes, yes!" I said, dancing with 'citement. "Cecil tells me them sometimes, specially on Sunday afternoons, when I have been good, and not fidgeted in church in the morning. Arrygories, she calls them."

"That's the name. Well, once upon a time-"

"Cecil always begins, 'Once upon a time.' I like it. Go on, Jock."

"Once upon a time there was a Great King who had a lot of servants whom he loved very dearly, and they loved him too."

"I know," I whispered. "A lot of Cecil's stories begin in that way.

"Now, the King said he wanted them to make a great city, and the way they had to do it was to build one house each. They could help each other if they liked—he wanted them to help, and be kind—but each person had to take charge of his own, and no one could do the work of another. And the houses were not a bit alike. Every one built in a different way, and every one had different things to build with. Some had beautiful stones, and lovely flowers to put in the gardens, and a grand view from their houses, and others had just common bricks, or

even only mud and straw. But the King said he wouldn't reward those who made the most splendid house-that wouldn't be fair-he would reward those who did the best they could with the things he gave them. A very strange thing about the houses was this-no one knew what he was going to work with next. The King built a wall before each person, and behind this wall were all the bricks and things which they would be allowed to use, but no one could see over it, or get round it, and it was made so that through a little door the things came out one by one on to a small ledge. They never knew what would come next, and there was never more than one at a time; but whatever it was they had to take it, and use it at once, or it would be pushed off by the next thing coming out, and if it were pushed off it fell down and smashed to powder, and was no use to anybody. It was wasted. Everything came out of the little door -bricks to work with-flowers to set in the garden-fruit to eat when they were hungry or tired-everything. The best of this 'rangement was that it was 'tended to make people hopeful and careful, 'cause if nasty things came out they could always hope that the next would be nice, and if nice ones they had to do their best while they had a chance, 'cause nasty ones might be behind. Now, the Great King had an enemy-"

"Wait a bit, Jock. Let me know what all this means 'fore we get to the enemy part. 'Course," I added, very ser'usly," I know who is the Great King, and who are the servants, too. We are the servants, aren't we? you and me, and Cecil, and Mr. Alan, and everybody; but what is the house we have to build?"

"That is our life," asplained Jock. "The way we live,—and the things we have to do. The bricks and things coming out of the little door are the things we ought to

be doing next. We never know what we will have to do the next minute, or whether there will be one."

"Why, Jock, I know in the morning when I get up that I shall be having breakfast soon, and after that going to school, and then—"

"You don't know, Dollie; you can't know. You expect to; but no one can tell. Sometimes for a long time the bricks come out so 'zactly the same as others have done that one forgets they may change. When you got up the day you were taken ill you 'spected things to be the same as usual—but they weren't. You didn't get up the next morning, or the next, or the next. You had to lie in bed, and get worse, and worse, and the bricks that came out then were very ugly and queer shaped, and they hurt you dreadfully—they were illness bricks—and you had to work on a very difficult and dangerous part of your house. S'pose your bricks had stopped coming out altogether, and the King had said your house need have no more done to it here!"

"That means I should have died," I said, gravely. 
"'Course! I see, Jock. No; one can't tell what will come next. I didn't quite understand 'fore. Cecil's tales are like this; I love them, only I can't always find them out for myself. I am glad my house is going on building. Do you think a holiday is working in the garden?"

Jock nodded. "Or building a nice easy part. Shall I go on? Where did I get to? Oh,—the enemy! Well, the Great King had an enemy who hated Him and His servants, and did his best to spoil all their plans. But the only way he could hurt the houses was by tempting the people to build them wrongly, or to be idle 'stead of working, or use his bricks 'stead of those which the King gave. He couldn't touch the houses themselves. So he sent out a lot of messengers, and they stood by the builders

and watched them at work, and when they saw anyone looking tired they would whisper, "Why do you bother to go building all the time? Rest a bit now. Or if you don't like to rest use these stones which are nice and easy to manage, and not nearly so awkward as those which the King is sending." Then, if the people were 'suaded, after a while they would find ugly stains coming out on the walls, 'cause those bricks weren't good ones. Or p'raps a person was working so hard at his house that he grew careless, and didn't notice what he was picking up, and 'stead of taking the King's stones from the ledge the enemy would softly hand his own stones to him, and he never knew till too late that that part was ruined. And when a part is ruined it can never be put right again. A person may be sorry, he may beg to be forgiven, he may make up his mind he will never do wrong again, but nothing will make that part right. It will always be there; he can never undo it. One of the most dreadful things the enemy tried to do was to make holes in the houses, and this was the way he managed. He 'suaded a boy to be idle, and not get on with his work, and then when he heard one of the inspectors coming—"

"What is a 'spector?" I asked.

"An inspector means a person who sees if you are doing your work well, and tells you how to do it if you don't know. My teacher said that fathers and mothers were the chief inspectors. I told her I hadn't a father or mother, only Alan, so she said Alan was my chief. Anybody who takes care of you, and sees you are a good boy, or girl, is an inspector."

I nodded. "I see. Go on. Cecil is mine. When he heard the 'spector coming—"

"He would say, 'Dear me! look how little work you have done! I'm afraid he will be very angry.' Then the

person was frightened, and said, 'Why haven't I done my work! What shall I do?' 'I'll tell you,' whispered the enemy. 'I have a strange kind of brick here which, if you will put it in your house, will fill up the amount of work you ought to have done. It doesn't matter how much, or how little; the brick will stretch, and the inspector will never know.' Then the person would agree, and would take the 'lastic brick, and put it on his house, and it would be quite true. He could go on with his building, and it looked as though he had done a splendid lot of work, and p'raps, if the inspector was in a hurry, he would just glance at it, and think it was all right, and go away; but if he 'xamined it he would see something was different, then he would push at it to see if it were strong, and what do you think would happen? The brick which looked so well would crumble up like powder. and there would be a great ugly hole which could never be filled up. They could build above, but that hole would be there for ever and ever."

"Asplain a bit, Jock. What was the 'lastic brick?"

"Why, don't you know? It is telling a lie. Whatever a person has done naughty one lie will fill up the whole time. If you haven't been to school for a whole day, or if you are just late five minutes to say 'I was sent somewhere else,' sounds like the truth, and if the inspecter doesn't 'xamine or ask questions you may get off; but if he does, well—there you are!—a big hole which nothing can fill up. And a house with a lot of holes in must be horrid; no one would feel sate or happy; you would be frightened of something happening; and if there were 'lastic bricks in which were not found out, you would always be wondering if the next time an inspecter came he wouldn't be 'xamining that part, and pushing another hole."

"Have you never, never told a—a—story, Jock?"
Lie is such a drefful word to use.

"Never!" said Jock, proudly. "And I never will. I'm afraid I put things into my house which oughtn't to be there, and waste a lot of good bricks, but I never will have a hole."

I sighed. "Sometimes one gets holes athout 'tending."
"No, you don't!" said Jock, quite 'cidedly. "You can
put wrong things in without knowing, but never a 'lastic
brick. There is something about it different to anything
else, and you can't be taken in."

"But you can, Jock," I whispered. "I did, once." Then I told him 'bout a drefful thing which happened, and which I had never told to a single person. "Cecil nearly always takes me to school, and brings me home again; and if she can't come one of the big girls lets me walk with her. There was a big girl who was very nasty and cross, and one day the teacher told her to take me. When it was time to go I saw her walk out of the house with her hat on, and I thought she had forgotton, and gone home; so I told the teacher, and asked if I mightn't go with someone else. And the next day there was a row. She had only run out to speak to someone for a few minutes, and then come back, and the teacher said I was a wicked girl, and told stories. I didn't mean, Jock. Truly and really, I didn't mean. I thought she had gone for good." Tears came into my eyes when I thought of that day, and how I had stood on the form for a whole hour, and everyone in the school looked at me, with their eyes saying, 'Little story-teller!' "But it was a hole, wasn't it?"

Jock was a very nice boy. "It's a shame, Dollie, a horrid shame! Didn't you tell them how it was?"

"I was too frightened. I tried at first, but the teacher

said I wasn't to try and 'scuse myself by more stories, so I daren't speak another word."

- "It was a shame! You should have told Miss Cecil. Why didn't you?"
- "I didn't like. You don't know how one feels when one is called a story-teller."
  - "But it wasn't a story, Dollie; it was a mistake."
  - "It wasn't the truth, though."
- "No; but my teacher was a nice one; she said mistakes are quite different. They look like holes from the outside and sometimes people can't tell the difference but the hole doesn't go through, you know, Dollie. The one inside knows it isn't a story, and the Great King, when he comes to 'xamine the houses, will know it, too. He never makes mistakes."

This was very comforting. "But it isn't nice for people to think so, Jock."

- "No, it isn't. But better have people think it is a hole and you know it isn't, than them not to find out, and you to know that one is there all the time."
- "P'raps. But I don't like them to think me naughty. Go on with the tale, Jock."
- "I don't 'member any more. There was a lot about ways of building and such things, but I can't think of it. I liked about the holes best."
- "Jock!" called Mrs. Garland. "I wish you would run after Mr. Franklin and Miss Lacy. Tell them they are going the wrong way; they must bear off to the left."

Jock ran on, and I walked along thinking over his tale, and making plans 'bout building my house. It helps one to be good when one plays a tale like that. I was very glad too, that I hadn't made a hole after all.

"What have you two been discussing?" asked Mr.

Dalton. "One might have thought you were deciding the fate of nations to judge by your serious faces."

I can't think why grown ups ask such uncomferable questions. How would they like to tell their private thinks 'fore a lot of strangers. And no one helps a little girl. As a rule they say, 'Speak up, Dollie; answer nicely,' when I don't want to answer at all. I wanted to say 'Oh nothing!" but 'membered in time it would be a hole, so I mustn't.

"Well, what was it. Secrets?" asked Mr. Dalton.

"No,-holes," I whispered.

"Holes? What a comical child. What kind of holes?"

"Holes in her manners, I should think," said Miss Malinson ever so severely, though I hadn't done anything to her.

"No, I know," said Cecil. "It was holes in dresses, wasn't it, Dollie? Never mind, my pet, you will be more careful in the future, will you not? and we don't talk of by-gone accidents."

It was sweet of Cecil to try and help me, but it wasn't quite the truth, so I was 'bliged to asplain.

"It was holes in houses, Cis-something Jock told me."

"Remarkable things children find to talk about!" said Mr. Dalton, staring at me.

"Don't know that they are any worse than adults," said Mr. Alan. Adults is another word for grown ups Cecil told me.

Jock came charging back out of breath. I was glad 'cause in asking him what Mr. Franklin had said they forgot me.

"I'll tell you what, Dollie," said Jock, dropping ahind. "The path circles round there, and if we run across the grass we can cut off a big corner. I'll race you who

can get there first; down this slope, across that green patch, up the other side, and the one who gets to Mt. Franklin first wins. You'll not want much start, 'cause I'm out of breath to begin. Are you ready? One, two, three, off."

Away I scampered. Jock waited a bit, and then came after me. In spite of being out of breath he soon passed me, and my only hope was that he would be too tired to get up the opp'site side quickly, so I did my best. But we never finished that race. Jock suddenly stopped, and came jumping back

"Look out, Dollie!" he shouted. "Don't come here; it's all messy. Oh, look at my shoes!"

We struggled into safety, and Mr. Alan came up asking, "Now, what have you done? Run into a marsh?"

"I didn't know, Alan. It was beautifully green. I thought it was grass."

"Someone else was beautifully green," said Mr. Dalton. "Don't you know, Jock, that the loveliest things are usually the most dangerous. They tempt a man to go on further and further till before he knows he is head over ears in—trouble."

He looked at Cecil as he spoke, as though she had been in the marsh. His eyes were nasty, and dear Cecil didn't seem to like it.

"But Jock didn't get head over ears," I said. "He had sense 'nough to come away at once when he found the ground couldn't bear him."

"Very sensible, too," said Mr. Franklin, who had come back from the wrong way. He laughed out loud, as though it were very funny; so did Dick, and then they coughed, and said it was a chilly wind, though it really wasn't.

"Are your stockings wet, Jock?" asked Mr. Alan, looking as though he were trying not to smile as well.

"Oh, I hope not! Shall I have to go back if they are?" asked Jock, sitting on the grass, and dragging off his shoes. "I don't think so; truly I don't! You might feel, Alan."

Mr Alan knelt down, and took hold of both of his feet, and pinched his toes. "All right!" he said, getting up, pulling Jock's feet with him, and rolling him over backwards. "All right, old fellow! Clean your shoes on the grass; you'll soon catch us up."

"What a blessing! I was afraid it was all up, Dollie."

It took rather a long time to wipe the shoes, the mud stuck so tightly, but at last Jock thought they would do, and we ran after the party. When we got to the top of the hill we found a long slope on the other side again, and as there was no green patch this time we 'cided to run down it 'stead of following the path. So we took hold of hands and started at a good speed. It was fun at first, but presently we were running faster than was nice, and we couldn't stop. I had never taken such big strides in my life, and was quite frightened, so pulled hard at Jock to stop, then caught my foot against something, and tumbled, and next moment we were rolling over and over, and never stopped till we reached the bottom. I felt bruised all over, and was just going to cry a little bit to myself, when Dick shouted:

"Well done, Dollikins,—a good roll, that—and you beat Jock, too!"

The others clapped their hands and laughed, and some one called, "Good for the lady!"

He meant me. When grown ups think one has done a thing for fun, and are praising and laughing, it would

never do to let them see one is nearly crying, so I winked very hard, and clenched my teeth tightly together till the trees and bushes stopped wobbling up and down, and the sunshine was clear again, and not all in misty streaks.

"Come along, Dollie," shouted Jock. "They are sitting down and getting the tea ready. Let's help."

#### CHAPTER VIII

#### THE HYDRA AT LAST

Mrs. Garland laid her beautiful cloth with the G worked on it on the grass, and lit the lamp, and put the kettle on, and the ladies and gentlemen helped to lay out the things, and then sat 'bout and waited till the water boiled.

- "You may thank Dollie that there is any sugar in your tea," said Mrs. Garland. "I had forgotten all about it."
  - "Three cheers for Dollie," called Mr. Franklin.
- "I'm ever so much obliged, Dollie," said Mr. Alan, pulling me down on to his knee. "I hate tea without sugar. I'm afraid I'm a sugar baby; I like four lumps. Do you call that greedy?"
- "Oh no!" I said shyly. "Cecil says it isn't greedy to want a thing, but it is if you take it when there isn't 'nough for other people."
- "Oh, that's it, is it? I'm glad of that. But four lumps is rather a lot." Mr. Alan shook his head, and was so sad that I had to comfort him.
- "Iwouldn't mind," I said, putting my arms round his neck, and giving him a hug. "I really wouldn't mind,

Mr. Alan. Cecil says she likes men who want a lot of sugar; it makes them sweet tempered."

"That is very kind of Miss Sinclair," said Mr. Alan smiling, and looking much happier.

Cecil grew very pinky, and said, "Oh, Dollie!"

"She didn't say it 'bout you," I asplained, in a hurry.

"It was 'fore we knew you. It was to a gentleman who gave her a big box of chocolates, and a kiss. Don't you 'member, Cis?"

Mr. Alan didn't seem nearly so happy. He pulled his moustache, and looked at Cecil, and she grew pinker than 'fore, and said, "Oh, Dollie!" again.

I was 'fraid she had forgotten, and thought I wasn't telling the truth, so I tried to tell her. "Oh, you must 'member, Cis, don't you? He was that nice old gentleman who came to see father, and when he saw you he said, 'Dear me! baby Cecil is quite a grown up lady!' Do try and 'member, Cis. Have you forgotten?"

Mr. Alan laughed, and pulled my hair softly. "No, she hasn't forgotten, Dollie; but you should never tell such things, you know, little woman. It isn't comfortable."

I was sorry to have made dearest Cecil uncomferable, and asked pardon, and promised not to say such things again, if I could help. But the worst of it is one never knows what are 'such things.' Grown ups don't care a bit 'bout what makes me shaky all over, and what I don't mind they get cross over. It is a puzzling world, specially for childern. 'Course every grown up has been a child, and ought to know what we don't like, but we haven't been grown ups yet—so there it is.

"Here comes the tea," said Mr. Alan. "Now, Dollie, do you think there is sufficient sugar for me to have the four lumps, or don't you?"

"I think there is, 'cause anyhow Cecil doesn't like any, so she will let you have her share, won't you, Cis?"

Cecil grew so pink again, that I asked if that was another 'such thing,' but she only laughed, and shook her head.

The tea was splendid, and Mrs. Garland said childern ought to have good appetites on the hills, and Cecil really mustn't say 'no' when she offered me three pieces of cake. When it was all over the grown ups began to talk. They don't often talk 'bout int'resting things, so Jock whispered to Mr. Alan that we should like to go and play.

"Is it safe?" asked Cecil. "Will they not lose their way?"

"I don't think so. Jock, keep that dead tree in sight, old man, and you will be all right. They will be quite safe, Miss Sinclair; there is nothing to hurt them about here."

So Cecil nodded, and smiled, and we ran away.

"What shall we do?" I asked.

"Look over there. Do you see that tree? When I went to wash out my cup at the stream I saw a low branch. If we got on we could have a jolly swing."

Jock was quite right. The branch was so low that when he lifted me up I could scramble across it, and my weight bent it down 'nough for him to climb. It was like riding on a horse, and we swung up and down for a long time. When we were tired Jock said:

"Now for the hydra, Dollie!"

It is horrid when a person always 'members what one wants him to forget.

"Couldn't we leave it alone for just this day?" I asked.

"Better do our duty and look for it a bit, then we shall have a clear conscience."

I didn't want a clear conscience, but I didn't say so. So we started to hunt. I had forgotten my club, so Jock pulled a branch, and stripped off the leaves. It didn't look a very safe weapon if we should find the hydra, but then nothing would be safe in that case; and if we didn't find it it would do as well as anything else. Jock always did things in earnest, so now he ran 'bout quietly so as not to frighten the hydra away, and peeped into holes, and pushed bushes aside with his sword, and said, "Hush! softly, softly, Amazon! What do I see?" "No, nothing!" "Is that a crackling of the undergrowth?" "A false alarm." "Ha! what think you is that dark mass?" "Nay, but a shadow." "Cheer up, Amazon, we will have him yet."

I didn't want to cheer up 'cause we were to find him. I should have cheered up much more had I been sure we should not; and everything Jock said made me jump, and look round in all d'rections. When I couldn't bear it any longer I said, "Jock, do you really think you see it every time you say things?"

Jock was shading his eyes with his hand, and glaring, but he said at once, "No, 'course not! It's only play."

"Then I won't play that way. If we have to look for it we will do it prop'ly, but 'less you promise not to p'etend to see it when you don't I shall go back to Cecil, and you can seek the old hydra yourself."

Jock 'greed sadly, "All right! It isn't half the fun, but if you don't like it we'll not bother any more to-day. Let us play at Follow my Leader. You can lead first if you want."

This was much nicer, specially when Jock took his turn. He thought of much queerer things to do than I did. After we had played this we thought it was time to

go back. We were standing at the edge of a rather deep hollow with trees and bushes at the bottom.

"The shortest way," said Jock, pointing to the dead tree some way off, "will be to cross this hollow; it's rather steep, so we'll not run down. Hullo! what's that?"

Some sheep that had been eating grass at the bottom suddenly rushed up toward where we were standing. Sheep are very silly. If one manages to creep softly up and give them a gentle pat they start, and rush away as though one were a butcher. I have given over trying to make friends with them. But 'stead of going in another d'rection these sheep came running as though they didn't see us. I was standing ahind a big stone and they didn't take any notice of me, but Jock was right in their path. He shouted, "Shoo! Shoo!" and waved his cap, but they never shooed a bit; one might have thought they were wolves 'stead of common sheep. Jock was so s'prised he never moved out of the way at all; one went bang against him, and knocked him down, and they all scampered by him, or over him and dis'peared.

I ran out, and knelt down. "Oh, Jock, are you killed?"

Jock sat up, very red, and 'stonished. "Did you ever see anything like it? It's all right, Dollie, don't cry. They haven't hurt me. None of them trod on me; but did you ever see such a thing? One old chappie jumped right over me. You have no idea how big a sheep looks when you are on the ground, and he is in the air."

He got up, and gave himself a shake.

"Oh, Jock," I said, hugging his arm. "Are you sure you're not killed? Horrid things! How brave you are!" Jock laughed. "I'm all right. And I have to try and

be brave, you know, 'cause of Alan. It would never do to be a coward. All the same, Dollie, I was awfully scared when that old chap jumped. He looked such a weight. I thought if he came down on my face he might crush it in. Doesn't it sound babyish to be afraid of a sheep? Wouldn't Alan laugh?"

"No, indeed! It must have been horrid! Mr. Alan would have been frightened himself."

"Frightened! Alan frightened of a sheep! Nonsense! you mustn't say things like that, Dollie. 'Course he wouldn't."

"But he is a big man, and you are only a boy. That makes a difference. I don't s'pose he would like it if an elephant jumped over him, and an elephant has soft padded feet, not hard ones like a sheep."

Jock said p'raps Mr. Alan wouldn't be quite comferable, but he didn't think in his heart that anything would really make him 'fraid. But it was time to be going back. If one stays away too long, and grown ups get worried, they say, "No!" next time one asks to be 'lowed to go and play. So we scrambled down the hollow till we got to the bottom. It was very shadowy down there, and very, very silent. When we stood still and listened there wasn't a sound, 'cept insecks humming and buzzing.

"I don't like it so dark, Jock," I whispered, getting hold of his hand.

"It's all right, Dollie. The reason is 'cause there are so many trees and bushes, and the sun is so far down it can't shine straight, but goes slanting over the top. Look how the ground slopes, too. It runs right down there, and then comes bending forward again. There must be quite a little cave through those bushes. Wouldn't it be a jolly place to play hide and seek in?"

He pushed aside the branches and peeped through. "I'll tell you what, Dollie, this is just the kind of place in which a hydra might lurk. If I hadn't promised not to play it any more to-day we would—"

Jock stopped quite suddenly.

It was there!!!!

In spite of the dimness we could make out a big grey body lying on the ground. One long neck with a horrid flat head was turned towards us, and another lay further back where it was still more dusky. The darkness was too great for us to see any of the others. Though it had been such a hot day this place was as cold as ice. I wanted to scream, but my mouth was dry, and I couldn't make a sound. I wanted to run, but something was holding me fast, and wouldn't let me move. I wanted to shut my eyes, but they wouldn't close, and hide the horrible creature. My teeth chattered, and all the hair on my head turned into pins and pricked me. How long we stood there staring I don't know, but at last it raised one of its long necks, and opened its mouth wide at us.

The next thing I 'member is running along as fast as I could with my eyes on the dead tree. I didn't know where the hydra was; and I didn't know how I had climbed out of the hollow. I couldn't feel anything, or hear anything, or see anything, 'cept that dead tree, and a loud voice inside my head which kept saying, "I want Cecil! I want Cecil! I want Cecil!" It wasn't till I fell and found Jock pulling me up that I knew he was there holding my hand, and helping me. I tumbled again and again on the ground. I knew I was knocking against stones, and once my head banged against a tree, but I didn't feel it, and didn't care for anything but the dead tree, and Cecil.

At length we came in sight of the party. Cecil was

sitting on the op'site side of the cloth, but I didn't mind, and never even thought of going round ahind. I rushed forward falling over Miss Malinson's legs, and getting a sharp shake, but I only minded 'cause it stopped me, and pulling myself away I tumbled down on to Cecil's lap with my arms fast round her neck. I heard myself saying, "Oh Cecil! Oh, Cecil! Oh, Cecil!" over and over again athout being able to stop. Everyone was talking at once, and shouting louder and louder, till the noise was drefful, and banged in my ears, but I only held Cecil tighter, and hid my face on her shoulder, and tried to creep closer and closer into her arms.

The first thing I heard quite plainly was Cecil speaking angrily, "Let her alone, Miss Malinson; you shall not touch her; I won't have her punished. Hush, Dollie! my pet, my baby! tell me what is the matter. Don't clasp so tightly; you hurt me. See, I have you fast."

The noise wasn't quite so loud, and though I still held on, I turned my face, and looked out. Jock was standing by Mr. Alan holding to his arm with both hands; his face was awfully white, and he was shaking all over, but he tried to stand still and hold up his head bravely.

Mr. Alan pulled him atween his knees and put his arm round him. "What is it, Jock? Try and speak clearly, old fellow. What has frightened you?"

"Oh, the hydra," I burst out; "the hydra, Cecil, the hydra—the hydra." I went on saying it like 'fore, till she pressed my face against her with her hand, and said:

"Be quiet, Dollie; don't try to talk. Be quiet, pet."

"Now, Jock," said Mr. Alan.

Jock began to speak very slowly and carefully, with stops atween, like one has to when one's lips are trembling 'll the words won't come plainly. "It was —in a hollow

-over there. It was lying in a dark part—it lifted it's head—"

"And opened it's mouth wide at us, Cecil. It was horrid! horrid!" I sobbed, clutching tightly again.

Some one took hold of my hands, and pulled them apart. The noise had gone by that time, and I could hear and see again. It was Dick. He was kneeling by us, and patting my cheek. "You are quite safe now, little one; but be careful! look! you are nearly choking poor Cecil."

I let go, and slipped down on to her lap, and got hold of one of her hands.

"I suppose there are no dangerous animals about?" said Dick.

"Nothing worse than sheep and an occasional goat," said Mr. Alan. "Now, Jock, describe it, laddie."

Jock looked at me. "It had a big woolly kind of body, and very long necks—very long necks—it had nine heads, but—"

"But I only saw two, Jock," I said. "It was too dark."

" I saw three," said Jock.

"Three heads!" shouted Dick. He was truly 'mazed. "What do they mean!"

Mr. Alan put his hand under Jock's chin, and turned his face up. "Jock!" he said ever so sternly; "you have been making up some of your games again, and frightening Dollie."

"I haven't, Alan; indeed, I haven't. I never even heard of it until---"

Jock stopped. He wouldn't tell of me, but I asplained at once.

"I told him 'bout it; he didn't know."

"Jock does make up games," said Mr. Alan to Cecil; and invents the weirdest creations. I am afraid it is his fault."

"It isn't, it isn't," I said, "And you told us 'bout the hydra yourself, Mr. Alan. Didn't he, Jock?"

"It seems to me," said Mr. Dalton, looking straight up at the sky, "that some one else has been amusing himself by frightening the little ones."

Mr. Alan grew very red. "I? I, frighten children? I really think, Dalton—"

"You didn't, Alan," said Jock; "you never did. But you told us there was such a thing as a hydra. Don't you remember?"

Mr. Alan looked uncomferable. Everyone turned to him. "I know Dollie asked a few questions on the subject, and I explained that there had been a fabulous beast of that name; but I never dreamt of terrifying the child."

"Of course not—of course not; one never does;" said Mr. Dalton softly.

Mr. Alan bit his lip. He was angry. "What do you mean?" he began, and then stopped, and said to Cecil, "I'm very sorry if anything I have said should have caused this trouble, but I can't understand it. As far as I recollect Dollie merely asked if there had ever been such a creature as a hydra, but as to how they can imagine they have seen it I am as much in the dark as anyone. Jock, do try and explain more clearly."

'Fore Jock could say anything more a horrid sound close by made us all jump. Athout looking to see I felt sure it was the hydra come after us, and clung to Cecil. I was terrified. "Oh, Cecil, it has come; oh, don't let it touch me! Cecil, don't let it!"

Everything was rocking up and down, and my heart was thumping as though it were trying to get outside. I heard Mrs. Garland say, "The child will have a fit if you can't quiet her. Be silent, Dollie!"

"Dollie, Dollie!" said Dick, "don't you know a sheep when it baas? You are safe enough."

Cecil didn't say anything, but she pressed her face close against mine, and I tried to stop sobbing. "I will be good, Cecil. I don't want to be naughty. Are you sure it isn't coming? Do hold me tight."

"I will not let you go, Dollie," she said, softly, "but you must be a good girl, and listen to me. There isn't such a thing as a hydra; there never was."

"But there is, Cecil; we saw it," I sobbed, shaking all over; "and Mr Alan said so, too."

"He said it was fabulous-" began Cecil.

"And it was, Cecil. I never saw such a fabulous thing, did you, Jock? Cecil, do hold me tighter; if you had only seen it's big mouth!"

"It truly was, Alan—dreadfully fabulous," whispered lock.

"Fabulous means a fairy tale," said Mr. Alan, smiling a little. "It means a make up thing, you know."

"We thought it was dangerous," said Jock.

"It's a pity such a creature was ever mentioned before a timid little girl," said Mr Dalton.

"But it can't mean make up, Cecil; we saw it, I tell you. And Dick said one lived here, and you know you said you were frightened of it, Cis; you know you did."

Dick opened his eyes wide. "Gracious! what does the child mean now?"

Mrs. Garland whispered something to Cecil who nodded, and took off my hat, and began to smooth my hair. "Never mind, Dollie. It must have been dreadful; but you are safe now, and we'll not talk about it any more. Try and forget it. Look what a mess you made of Mrs. Garland's pretty cloth when you ran over it. There is a footmark right in the middle."

"I'm sorry, Cis," I whispered. "Is she very angry with me?"

"I hope not. You must say 'beg pardon' when we get back. Would you like to help her to pack the things?"

"Oh, no, no! Let me sit here, Cis. I'll be so good, if only you hold me."

Everybody began tidying, and putting the cups and saucers in the baskets. Cecil sat still, and petted me, and wrapped a shawl round me when my teeth kept chattering.

"Jock!" said Miss Malinson, "I must have dropped my handkerchief by the stream when I went to wash my cup. Go, and seek it."

Miss Malinson never said 'please.' Jock grew very pale again, and gave a scared look round, but he held his head high, and clenched his hands, and walked off at once. I was thankful Dick had never saved anyone's life, so that I had to be so brave. I clutched at Cecil with my hands all wet and cold. She looked at Mr. Alan, and said ever so softly; "Mr. McKenzie."

He was packing up things a little way off, but though Cis had spoken so low he heard at once, and came to her. Dearest Cecil nodded towards Jock, and whispered; "He is a plucky little fellow, but he has had a dreadful fright. Won't you—"

She got rosy, and looked sweeter than anybody else ever does, and seemed as though she was asking pardon.

Mr. Alan nodded instantly. "I'll help you to find it, Jock," he said.

Jock was greatly alieved, though he would have gone alone if Cecil hadn't asked Mr. Alan. By the time they came back everyone was ready to go. Cecil lifted me to my feet, and took hold of my hand. I tried to walk, but my legs were all wobbly, just like they were after that

bad illness when I first got out of bed, and I tumbled down.

Mr. Alan lifted me up, and seated me on his arm. "I'll carry her for a bit," he said smiling.

"We can't trouble you," said Cecil in a big hurry.
"Dick!"

"Oh no, Cis!" I said, holding Mr. Alan's neck. "No, not Dick—Mr. Alan, please. I will try and not make myself heavy."

"What's the matter?" asked Dick. "Hullo, Dollikins! feel shaky? Come along; though you are a big baby."

I squeeged Mr. Alan, and he laughed. "All right, Sinclair! I'll keep her for a while, then you can take her if she is such a heavy weight that I can't manage. If anything I have said has caused all this fright, I must show how sorry I am."

"Oh, Dollie?" said Cis, shaking her head at me as Dick walked away, "that is very naughty. You are bothering Mr. McKenzie, and being unpolite to Dick, too."

"I didn't mean to be rude, Cis," I asplained. "But you see, Dick goes with the other ladies, and Mr. Alan always walks with you."

Cecil grew rosy all over, and Mr. Alan laughed out loud. "Quite right, Dollie! so I do. Dollie is a lady of much observation."

"There is no need for her to tell all she observes," said Cecil, but she laughed too, though she wouldn't look at us.

"You will walk near her, won't you?" I begged.

"For as long, and as closely as she will allow me," said Mr. Alan, holding out his hand to help her down a long step. He kept hold for a little even when she was

down safely. He knew I was afraid she would go away. It was very kind and gen'rous of him.

Cecil pulled her hand away, and said, "Don't be absurd!" It looks cross when one sees it written, but it didn't sound a bit nasty the way she said it.

Mr. Alan carried me so long as we were on the hills, but when we got to the road I told him I would walk. I didn't mind when we could see a long way ahind, and there were no horrid holes where the hydra could hide and jump out 'fore we knew it was there. So I kept hold of Cecil's hand, and Jock took hold of my other, and we both squeeged each other's fingers very tightly.

"We didn't think all this would happen when we started on the picnic, did we, Dollie?" he whispered low, "You see I was right about the way the bricks are given out for the houses."

#### CHAPTER IX

# JOCK RISKS MARTYRDOM

When tea was over Cecil sat and worked, and I curled up by her and watched the people walking up and down the corridor. Jock came soon, and it is s'prising what a lot people have to say to each other who have seen a hydra. But we hadn't much time to talk. Mrs. Garland came to us and said:

"Do you know, Dollie, there is something mest interesting in the kitchen? Cook says you may go down and see if you like, and Jock, too."

"What is it?" I asked, while Cecil rolled up her work.

"I think I won't tell you that. Come along,"

Cook was standing in the middle of the kitchen. She was a very fine woman with red hair, and red arms, and a red face, and a very big smile. She was very handsome, and very nice, and I thought her still nicer when she kissed me, and said, "Pore little dear!"

"Now, Dollie," said Mrs. Garland," you had better coax Cook to show you what it is.

Cook looked so nice that I didn't feel very shy, so put

my arms round her as far as they would go; she was so large that they wouldn't reach all the way, but Jock went to the other side, and when we took hold of hands we managed atween us to give her one cuddle.

"Do show us, Cook," we said; "do show us."

Cook was very funny; she burst out laughing, and said, "Arrah! thin, an' who cud resist 'em!"

Then she went to a cupboard and brought out a basket. A big cat came walking by her side purring very loudly, and holding her tail nearly straight, and rubbing against her dress. She knelt down, and opened the basket, and let us peep.

"Oh, the kitties! the little kitties!" we shouted, throwing ourselves on the ground to see the four beaut'ful, sweet things.

"Oh, Cook, let me hold one. I'll be awfully careful. The little darlings!"

Cook lifted two, and put them on my lap, and Jock picked up another and pressed it against his cheek. They quivered all over, and said tiny mews, and their little legs would hardly bear them. The mother rubbed against my arm, and stuck her tail in my face, but she knew I wouldn't hurt her babies, and didn't mind me petting them.

"They're blind," said Jock, 'zamining them carefully.

"All of them?" I asked, in dismay. "What a very sad thing! Does it run in the family?"

"It's all right, Dollie. Kittens and puppies are always born blind. They will learn to see in about ten days."

I looked hard at Jock to see if he was making fun, but he said. "Fact! Isn't it, Cook?"

"An' so it is," said Cook. I can't 'member all the

queer things she said. "An' it's you that's a cliver bhoy, Masther Jock."

"I'll come down every day and see them, if I may, Cook," I said eagerly. "I should like to be sure they get better."

Cook looked thoughtful. "Well, that's just how it is, you see, Miss Dollie. Oi said to Mrs. Garland, 'If Miss Dollie' ud loike to see 'em, let her come at wanst.' Oi've an idee that they will nearly all die to-night."

I was perfeckly horrorfied. "Die, Cook? How drefful! Why do they, and how do you know?"

"It's this way, Miss Dollie. Kittens are pore critters at the best, and very few live to be more than a few days old. They have a lot of thrials and throubles, and don't seem to set their moinds to gettin' over 'em, loike."

"Oh, poor little things! Do you feel sure they must die? Isn't there a chance?" I petted and kissed the wee babies, and felt nearly ready to cry. It was so mournful.

"Oi'll tell you what! how 'ud you loike to have wan for yerself, Miss Dollie, and take it home wid yer?"

"Oh, Cecil, can I? Dearest, darling Cecil, I'll be so good; it would be such a dear little pet."

Cecil smiled. "Would you like it so much? Well, I don't think mother would mind. As Cook is so kind I think you might."

I hugged her and thanked her, and then hugged Cook. Then a sudden thought came. What was the good of saying I could have the kittie if it would die 'fore the morning. I asked very sorrowfully if it were quite certain it wouldn't live.

"Now it's just this way, Miss Dollie. There's no denying it that kittens are very affectshunate little bastes, and whin wan knows that somewan loves it, and is going

to kape it, it sthops thinking about it's throubles, and sets it's moind upon livin'. I shouldn't wonder if ye was to choose wan that ye'd find it all right to-morrow."

I looked at Cook to see if she were ser'us and said, "S'pose I don't say which one I'll have, and they may all hope it will be them, and so we would save the lot."

"Kittens is too knowin' to be desaved loike that. More loikely they'd all give up, and go off straight away. No, you take yer chice, Miss Dollie."

I zamined them all very carefully. There was one little blackie, one black and white, and two tabby. It was very painful to think that whichever I didn't have had to die. It must have been an anshus time for them. I asked Jock, Cecil, and Mrs. Garland, and Cook in turn. As soon as my mind was made up for one, another would look so sweet that it altered again.

"I wouldn't have a tabby, Dollie," said Jock. "Seeing there are two alike it would be a pity to divide them. One might feel lonesome by itself."

"The sinse av the bhoy!" said Cook.

At last I 'cided on the little black and white one.

"An' right it is, Missie," said Cook; "and it's mesilf can see that the little critter has taken a fancy to yer. Look how it clings whin Oi lift it away."

"But it clings to you just the same, Cook."

"Not the same. There's a differ, Miss Dollie. If a big man lifts yer on to his shouther yer hold on fast to him even if yer don't loike him, but if yer love him there's a differ, sure an' isn't there? How 'ud ye loike wan, Masther Jock?"

He shook his head. "It wouldn't do, thank you, Cook. I've got white mice, and white rats, and a guinea rig, two rabbits, and a terrier, 'sides Rex our Newfound-

land who b'longs to Alan. I'm afraid Kittie mightn't get on with the others, and Alan says it is cruel to have animals, and not make them happy."

Cook lifted up her hands. "Sure an' it's glad Oi am not to be yer Ma, Masther Jock, wid such a happy family."

- "I haven't a mother," said Jock.
- "Thin yer auntie."
- "I haven't an auntie either—at least she doesn't live with us—there's only Alan, and he loves pets. He helps me to clean the cages sometimes, and to feed them, that is he sits and smokes and looks on, and tells me what to do."
- "Come, Dollie," said Cecil, "say 'good-night' to Cook, and thank her for the kittie. We must go to bed now."
- "What shall you call her," asked Jock, after I had hugged and kissed Cook.
- "I don't know. What would you? Is it a gentle-man or a lady, Cook?

Cook coughed. "A lady, Miss Dollie, Oi belave."

- "Call it Ratter," said Jock. "It might grow up to be a good one, and be no end useful."
- "I'll not do anything of the kind. Kittie is far too nice to eat any nasty rats. I shall call her Madeline."

Cook coughed again. "Good-noight, Miss Dollie, swate drames. Good-noight, Masther Jock."

All the time I was undressing I talked very fast 'bout my kitten, how pretty she was, and did Cecil think she would learn to see, and was there any chance of her living, and things like that. Do you know what it is to talk 'bout a thing, and p'etend one is very int'rested, and thinking 'bout nothing else, and all the time to know there is a horrid think waiting and waiting till Cecil turns the gas low, and says "Good-night?" That was the

way it was with me. I was talking Kittie, and the think about the hydra was there. I was as long getting into bed as poss'ble, and when at last there weren't any more 'scuses left there was nothing to do but scramble in, and pull the clothes over my head, and shut my eyes fast. 'Stead of going away at once Cecil sat down, and began to write a letter. I squeeged my eyes tighter than ever, and said all my hymns, which is usually a very good way when one wants to go to sleep in a hurry. Sleep is a very contrary thing. When one wants to go off quickly so as to bring the morning, or not to be left alone in the dark, it will not come, and when one wants to stay awake and have a talk with Cecil when she comes to bed, the first thing one knows is that it is daylight. knew all this, so wasn't s'prised when the sleep wouldn't come. but I didn't talk nor move about.

At last Cis turned the gas rather low, but not so low as usual, and went very softly out of the room. I wanted to beg her to stay, but I didn't like. As soon as she was gone there were all kinds of creaks and noises of things moving. My eyes squeeged tighter and tighter, but all the same I could see red and blue and green things moving up and down. Some of them were in rings, and some weren't, but tried to make themselves so, and I watched them with my eyes closed. Then came a louder creak than ever, and my heart began to thump, and I got all cold, and wet. Why do hearts thump when one is frightened? It only makes it worse. Could the hydra poss'bly have come down from the hills, and got into Sunnyside and under my bed athout anyone knowing? and what would dear Cecil say if when she came up she didn't find any Dollie, but only a big thing with nine heads, like Little Red Riding Hood found a wolf 'stead of her grandmother? How drefful if Cecil got into bed athout finding out, and when she said 'Move away, Dollie," a big hydra should move. Only it wouldn't move away. It would move nearer, and eat her up. How 'stonished darling Cecil would be. These things made me feel worse and worse. Would Cecil be very angry if I got out of bed, and ran down stairs to her! but though I thought of this, I knew I daren't go.

At last there was a real noise, just a soft little knock at the door. I sat up in bed.

"Oh, do come in!" I sobbed. "I don't care who it is; come in, somebody, please."

The door was pushed open very caushumsly, and it was Jock in his trousers and shirt.

"Are you frightened, Dollie?" he whispered. "I thought you would be. I'll stay with you."

"Will you, dear, dear Jock? Did Cecil send you?"

"No," said Jock, standing on a chair, and turning the gas a little higher. "No one sent me. Alan told me to go to bed, and as soon as I was alone it felt all creepy crawly. Then I knew if a boy, and specially a boy who has to be brave 'cause of his brother, felt like that, a little girl would be much worse. So I came."

Jock climbed on the bed, and sat down. I knelt up, and put my arms round his neck. "Isn't it dreffully naughty? Won't Cecil and Mr. Alan be cross?"

Jock was quite cheerful. "I don't know. We must risk that. Get into bed again, and then you won't feel cold, though it's so hot I don't b'lieve anybody could take cold to-night. See, I've brought my race game. Let's play. Which horse will you have—the white or the brown?"

It felt worse than naughty to play races in bed when Cecil thought I was asleep. It felt wicked. "I'm sure it's naughty, Jock."

"I don't think it is," said Jock. "Alan says I must always take care of people weaker than I am, and you are weaker, you know, Dollie, so I must take care, and it wouldn't be taking care if I left you here to be frightened, and I went to sleep."

"But they will be angry."

"P'raps they won't find out," said Jock.

This sounded wickeder than ever. "S'pose they do?"

"Then most likely Alan will whip me, but I shall have to stand it. Alan says, 'Always do what is right, and never mind what happens. If you get into trouble by it, bear it like a man.' I will. If Alan whips me I shall be a martyr."

"Oh, Jock, you wouldn't! Martyrs are gentlemen or ladies in their nightgowns tied to a big piece of wood, and a fire all round them burning them to death. I have a picture of it in the same book as the hydra, and Cecil has told me tales. That's what a martyr is."

"A martyr is a person who is punished for doing what he thinks is right. Alan says so, and he knows. He says it doesn't matter what the punishment is."

It was very 'pressive to think that Mr. Alan might whip Jock thinking he was just a naughty boy, and all the time he would be a martyr. It was comforting too, but it would hurt just as much. I said so to Jock.

"'Course it would, but that couldn't be helped. I don't think much of a whipping. Boys have to have them. Alan says it's good training. He doesn't often whip me though, 'cause I don't do things he doesn't like. You don't when you love a person and want to be like him."

I shivered. A whipping sounded drefful. Sometimes

when I was very bad father smacked my hands, and it was painful. I always cried. I wondered if Jock did, but didn't like to ask. One never likes people to know if one has been crying, but washes one's face with cold water, and rubs it hard to rub the red off the eyes.

"Now, Dollie, choose your horse, and you can begin. These are the dice. Shake them up, but mind they don't fall on the floor, or get lost in the bed clothes. Whatever number comes out you can move on that number of lines."

It was a 'citing game, and I soon forgot how bad it was to be playing. Once someone came and stood outside the door and whistled softly. It was Dick. It was the tune he always whistled when he wanted us to know he was there. Dear Cecil must have sent him up to see if I were asleep, and he whistled athout opening the door so as not to wake me, and I was playing a game on the bed. All the wickedness of it came over me again, and I tried hard to do my duty.

"Don't you think you had better go, Jock?" I asked. "I'm not so frightened now."

I knew I should be as soon as he was gone, so I was very glad when he said, "No," and he wasn't going till time for Cecil to come to bed.

So we played another game, and then Jock told me 'bout his pets, and what a jolly little chap his terrier was, and what a grand dog Rex was. Rex b'longed to Mr. Alan, but Jock could play with him whenever he liked. He used to ride on him when he was small, and Rex never knocked him off. I grew so int'rested I forgot all 'bout being naughty and the hydra and everything, and was quite s'prised when we heard people running upstairs, and talking and laughing outside.

"I guess Miss Cecil won't be long now," said Jock, sliding off the bed and packing up his game. "Dollie, should you be frightened if I went now? I will stand just inside my room and watch your door, so if anything came I could see it, and if you feel very bad just throw this shoe at the door, and I'll hear it bang."

"No, I don't mind very much," I said, trying hard to be brave. "Jock, dare you look under the bed, and in the cupboard 'fore you go?"

Jock nodded. "There's nothing there. If you think you'll be too much afraid I'll stay."

"I don't want you to be a martyr for me, Jock."

"Well, I don't 'zactly want to be myself; but we promised to be chums, you know, and chums must always stand by each other."

Jock lowered the gas, and stood listening at the door for several minutes. "Coast's clear. Good-night, Amazon."

I said, "Good-night, Rover," but I didn't feel like an Amazon. I felt more like a beaut'ful weeping maiden, but I was 'shamed to say so.

I watched the door till it opened, letting in a long streak of light, then it shut, and Jock was gone, and I got the bed-clothes over my head, and breathed fast, and kept saying, "I'm not frightened—not very; and Jock is watching, and nothing can hurt me."

Cecil told me once that there were more than three thousand seconds in an hour. I knew she couldn't be a whole hour 'fore she came so I tried to count them quickly so as to make time go fast. But I was always forgetting where I was through stopping to listen.

At last someone took hold of the handle, and Cecil whispered, "Hush! good-night, Dick. Don't make a roise. I don't want the child wakened."



# JOCK RISKS MARTYRDOM

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My heart stopped thumping, and my breath panting, and the wet from coming out all over me. Afore she had done more than take off her pretty bracelets I was fast asleep.

There is much comfort in a sister Cecil.

#### CHAPTER X

#### WE GET INTO TROUBLE

"I say, do you know there is a fair in the village?" asked Alfred.

Jock was busy picking up his bows and arrows, so I answered, "Yes, Jock told me 'bout it."

When we had been to the bazaar with Mr. Franklin, after we had seen every toy there Jock said he would like an Archery best. He 'vised me to buy an indoor game 'cause he would let me play at his Archery when we were out of doors, and when it was evening we could play at mine. So the shop lady brought out a beaut'ful box which she said was a 'Pendium. A 'Pendium means that there are a lot of games inside, chess and draughts, and go-bang and lotto, and others whose names I don't 'member. I didn't think it fair to have them all as Mr. Franklin had only promised one, but he said it was all right, and if I liked it it should be wrapped up in brown paper for me. So I thanked him very much, and so did Jock, and he was very funny, and said something 'bout being the 'bliged party all the same.

When Mr. Alan saw what Jock had he shook his head

gravely, and said he was 'fraid of accidents, and that they soon happen. So he made him promise only to play in one corner of the garden where nobody could walk ahind the target, (the target was the big round piece of board we had to aim at), 'cause there was no way for them to get—only a big wall. And he had to promise not to aim at anyone, but only at the target. Jock was dis'pointed. He had whispered to me that he should practise till he was clever, and try and shoot the hydra, but now he would have no chance 'less it came into that special part of the garden. This was very trying, Jock said, but a promise was a promise.

But though there was no chance of taking it outside and fighting the hydra still we worked hard. The game was who could hit nearest the bull's eye. The bull's eye was the middle of the target. It didn't look like an eye of a bull, or anything else, but that is what it is called.

When Alfred saw it he wanted to play too, and Jock let him; but he wouldn't play fair, and he would point the arrows at us, and at diffrent parts of the garden, so lock wouldn't let him have it any more, and when he inte'fered he knocked him down, and told him if ever he touched his bow again he knew what he would get. When people know what they will get, gen'rally they don't behave so as to get it. Alfred didn't. He said lock was mean, but he didn't want to touch his old things, so there! So Jock and I practised by ourselves. At first we couldn't hit the target at all, let alone the bull's eye, but after a while we got better, but Jock could do better than I could. He said it was 'cause he was a boy. I didn't see why, and Jock said he didn't see why either, but it was so. If we both tried to learn sewing together I should do it first 'cause I was a girl. This is very cur'us.

As Alfred couldn't play we usually stopped when he came out, so when he asked that question 'bout the fair Jock said he would put the things away.

"It's a jolly fair!" he said, when Jock had packed the archery in a box. "I saw a bit of it when I was passing with father yesterday. Have you ever seen a fair?"

- "I have," said Jock. "I have been to three."
- "I never have," I said.

"I've been to thousands," said Alfred. "They are jolly fun."

Alfred had always seen things, or done things so many more times than anyone else. I b'lieved him at first, but afterwards I began to be 'fraid that he had a lot of holes in his house.

- "Thousands?" said Jock, laughing. "You must have been at fairs nearly all your life."
- "Well, hundreds, then," said Alfred, sulkily. He didn't like being laughed at. "I say, wouldn't you like to go, Jock?"
- "I should. I wonder if Miss Cecil would take us! Do you think she would, Dollie? Alan has gone away for the afternoon, so we can't ask him."
- "It's no use asking Cis either. She is playing tennis to-day. P'raps she would to-morrow."
- "To-morrow's no good," said Alfred. "The fair finishes to-day. I'd awfully like to go. Will you come, lock?"
  - "Not without asking."
- "I never knew such a baby," said Alfred, crossly. "You are as bad as a girl—as bad as Dollie. You can't do anything without asking leave. I wouldn't ask; I'd just go."
  - "Dare say you wouldn't," said Jock. He never

minded being told he daren't do things. "P'raps if I had only a mother who cried at things, and a father who daren't punish me I wouldn't ask; but it's different when I have a brother like Alan."

I thought Jock was rather rude, and 'spected Alfred would hit him. I should have hit anybody who spoke like that of my Cecil, but Alfred didn't seem cross. He said:

"I do as I like, I do." Then he thought for a while. "I say, p'raps Miss Cecil would let us go by ourselves."

"I'm sure she wouldn't," I said.

"Why not? She lets you go to the beach alone sometimes, and into the fields too, and yesterday, you know, she let you and Jock go to the village. The fair is close to the village, why shouldn't we go there?"

This was quite true. P'raps, after all, Cecil wouldn't mind, and I wanted so very much to go. Alfred began telling us things which were there, and it grew interestinger and interestinger. I jumped up.

" I'll ask Cecil."

"I tell you what," said Alfred. "I'll go and ask. If she lets us, you don't want to be tired before we start, you know, Dollie, and it's rather a long way to the tennis ground. Jock might be putting his Archery by."

I would rather have asked myself. Cecil didn't much like Alfred, and she might say 'no' to him, but if I were to coax she might let us go. But I didn't like to tell him this. It was very nice of him to offer, and Cecil says gentlemen should always wait on ladies, and do their errands. All the gentlemen in Sunnyside used to do things for her. So I said perlitely, "Thank you. It is very kind," like Cecil does.

Alfred was rather a long time away. Jock came back, and was going off in search of him when ne came carrying my jacket. "Miss Cecil says we may go, and she will come after us in an hour if she can; but, anyhow, we are not to stay late, and Dollie is to put on her jacket 'cause the wind is a bit chilly outside."

I didn't want to put on the jacket, it was warm enough athout, and wanted to go and ask if I need, but Alfred asuaded me not.

"I wouldn't, if I were you, Dollie. She said 'no' at first, and if you worry she might say 'no' again."

It was wiser not to go. Grown ups do change their minds so very, very quickly if one worries them.

"Have you any money?" asked Alfred. "It's no good going to a fair without money. I have heaps." He rattled his pockets and we could hear clinking.

"I have a shilling and sixpence," said Jock.

"And I have a threepence, three pennies, and four ha'pennies," said I.

"Don't think much of that," said Alfred. "I have more than both of you put together. But come on."

So we ran down the garden. As we were passing the house Jock said, "Wait a minute," and though Alfred was cross, and wanted me to go on I wouldn't till Jock came back with his sword buckled on, and another sword which he fastened round me. He didn't like to take Mr. Alan's stick athout asking, and said anyhow the sword was smaller, and handier.

Then we pushed open the gate, and ran down the lane to the village. When we were a long way off we could hear a lot of different sounds. People were shouting, and drums banging, and whistles whistling, and music playing, and animals roaring. There was a great many people. It was quite a big crowd. I held fast to Jock's hand, and almost wished at first that Cecil had not altered her mind, and let us come.

- "What shall we do?" asked Alfred.
- " Everything," said Jock.
- "But what first?"
- "Let us have a ride on the horses."

So we pushed our way through the crowd till we came to the whirli-go-rounds.

- "You'll stay near me, won't you, Jock," I whispered. "'Member we are chums."
- "'Course. Don't be frightened, Dollie. Which horse do you like? Look at those two side by side. They are Arabs. See how red their nostrils are, and how they spurn the ground."

Spurning means kicking Cecil says, but these horses didn't; they couldn't touch it, they were lifted up, but their legs were stretched out as though they were running fast. They were so high that I couldn't climb up, but a kind gentleman lifted me, and said, "A penny, missie. Thank you. Hold fast."

Jock scrambled on his, and he leaned over to me, and whispered, "Amazon, we are now starting in search of 'ventures. Shall we ride to the Great Libyan Desert?"

It sounded grand. Jock always played games whatever he did. I was so glad he was my chum, and let me play too. It made life int'resting. "Yes, let's. But what is a Great Libyan Desert, Jock?"

- "I don't know. Alan does. He read it out one day. Now, Dollie, we are starting. Hold on!"
- I was 'bliged to stick tightly to the iron rod which was in the horse's back, but Jock held the reins with one hand, and pointed out objecks of int'rest with the other. He had to shout 'cause of the music. It was beaut'ful music, but rather loud.
  - "Do you see the tents, Amazon? There lurk our

enemies. Hie on, good steed, hie on! They are passed, and we are safe. Good old fellow! Can't he race! Do you hear the distant roaring? We must fight those lions sometime, but at present time presses, and we must ride. Listen to the shouting of the people—but our horses show no weariness. We must cover many leagues ere we stop."

"What's leagues?" I panted clinging fast, but letting go with one hand to pat my horse, "and what must we cover them with?"

"I don't know," said Jock. "Do you see those mountains? They must be the Rockies. Hie on, my Arab! We shall soon be there."

They weren't really the Rockies; they were the hills ahind Sunnyside, but we p'etended they were. "Or else the Appernines," I said.

"It may be, Amazon, it may be. Oh, we are stopping. Mind you don't fall. That's right. We are now just two million miles from Sunnyside, and must explore the Great Libyan Desert."

I felt glad we were not really so far as that away from Cecil. Two million miles is rather a distance.

- "Where's Alfred?" said Jock. "Oh, here you are. You're rather white. What's the matter?"
  - "Feel a bit sick," said Alfred.
  - "It must have been the horses."
- "No, it isn't, then. It is something I had for dinner. Come on. Look, there's a gipsy. I want my fortune told."
- "Cross my hand with silver, pretty gentleman," said the gipsy, "cross the old gipsy's hand with silver, and she will tell you what will happen."

She was very brown, and her face was wrinkled, but her eyes were black and bright. Her shoulders leaned forward so much that her face stuck further out than her feet; she had a stick to walk with, and a red hankershiff round her head.

Alfred gave her a whole sixpence. "Tell me a good fortune."

"Of course I will," said the gipsy taking hold of his hand, and bending down her face till it nearly touched. When she had 'zamined it for a while she stood up and began pushing her thumbs along his hand, opening it wide, and shutting it up, and she looked up and said, "The pretty gentleman will be rich—very rich."

Alfred pushed out his chest. He was proud.

"But he will always give his money with a generous open hand."

"I shan't," said Alfred. "I don't believe in giving money away. I keep what I have got."

The gipsy nodded. "The little gentleman did not let me finish what I was saying—He will always give his money with an open hand to gain what he wants himself, but he will hold it tightly against other people. He will have lands, and horses, and dogs, and everything to make him happy. He will have adventures—he will have a beautiful yacht—"

"I hate the sea," said Alfred, crossly.

The gipsy shook her head. "I did not say the pretty gentleman would go on it. It will race, and bring him much money. He will marry a beautiful lady, and every one will envy him."

Alfred nodded. "That's right. What's the good of having things if other people don't want them too."

The gipsy turned to me. "Will the pretty little lady learn her fortune? With such a lovely face it will be a good one."

I shook my head, and held tightly to Jock. I didn't

like her, and didn't want to know what would happen when I was a grown up.

After coaxing a little she spoke to Jock. "This little gentleman would like to know."

"I want to know if I shall have 'ventures," said Jock, eagerly. "But, wait a bit. I haven't so much money as Alfred. Will you tell me for twopence?"

"Can't do it under silver. Must cross the gipsy's hand with silver, little gentleman."

Jock thinked. "If I do I shan't have much left for everything else, and there are such a lot of things I want to do."

"And it will happen just the same," I said, "only you won't know 'forehand. I like s'prises."

Jock sighed. "I should like to know if I was going to shoot lions and tigers, and to travel over seas. Can't you do it for twopence?"

"Not for less than silver; silver is for luck. Isn't it better worth while knowing what will happen when you are a big man than seeing those worthless shows?"

Jock sighed, and thinked again. Then he pushed back the twopence into his pocket, and said, "I guess I'll wait. Come on, Dollie."

The gipsy waited till we were gone away, then came hobbling after us. "I'll tell it for twopence, but it won't be so good as if it were silver."

"Why won't it?" I asked, gravely. "It must be just the same on Jock's hand whether he gives you silver or only pennies."

"That's so," 'greed Jock, staring at her. "No, I b'lieve I'll not have it done. Good-bye."

The gipsy grew very angry and shouted all kinds of nasty things at us. She said Jock would come to a bad end, and I should have a mis'rubble life. We were

rather uncomferable till I 'membered she had never seen our hands, and couldn't really know; and Jock said if she wouldn't tell for twopence it wasn't likely she would give it all away for nothing. So we 'cided it was naughty temper, and didn't think anything more 'bout it. But Alfred was very swell, and talked 'bout the things he would do when he was grown up with his money.

"Let's go to the 'nagerie," said Jock. "I'd like to see the animals. Look at the pictures, Dollie. Six lions in one cage, and a man in the middle."

It was rather a big place when we got inside, and there were cages all round. The animals were making noises all together. It made one keep turning round to be quite sure something was not clawing one from ahind. This is not 'greeable. The first cage had a lion in it. It was very big, and had a lot of hair coming over one side of its head just as the picture book showed it ought. It kept giving deep grunts, not very loud, but sounding as though there were a lot of loudness down below which it could bring out if it wanted. It was walking up and down, and the cage was so small it had only to take three or four steps afore it had to turn; and it breathed so hard that the dust flew away from the front of it. Alfred threw a little stone at it, and it jumped against the bars, and stood right up on its hind legs, and roared a dreffully loud roar. All the other animals roared too. A man with blue things on came from somewhere and shouted, "Down, Leo, down! Quietly!" And presently Leo downed, and began walking about and grunting again.

We went to see the other animals. There was a brown bear, and a white one, and some nasty wolves, and a laughing hyæna, but he wouldn't laugh, and then the showman said, "And now, ladies and gentleman, I am going to show you one of the greatest wonders of the world,-even a genuine Missing Link."

He said a lot more which I couldn't make out,something bout the Missing Link being a forefather of

"What's a forefather, and what does he mean?" I asked.

"I know about it, I do," said Alfred proudly. "A forefather means a kind of grandfather, and he says that that is our grandfather. I know all about it. Father talks to clever gentlemen, and they all believe that it is our grandfather. Father believes it, and so do I. Mother doesn't, but father says women never do understand science."

I stared at Alfred's grandfather in disgust. He was just a great big ugly monkey athout a tail. I should have been 'shamed if I were Alfred.

- "Whose grandfather do you say he is?" asked Jock.
- "Everybody's—yours, and mine, and everybody elses.
- "He isn't mine," I said, crossly. "Mine is a big gentleman with white hair and a moustasche, and he lifts me on his knees, and gives me presents."
  - "And he isn't mine," said Jock. "Mine's dead."
- "Yes, he is. He's everybody's," said Alfred. "Father says so, and he's a Professor."
- "Nonsense!" said Jock. "It's silly! Who would ever invite a grandfather like that to come and stay with vou-"
- "And give him the best bedroom, and hang up clean curtains," I added. "I don't b'lieve you dare go and sit on that grandpa's knee. I'd rather have an elephant for a grandpa; you could ride on his back even if you couldn't on his foot."

Alfred was puzzled. He walked close to the cage, and tried to poke his finger through and touch his grand-father's back. The showman snatched at his collar, and his grandfather snatched at his sleeve. Alfred yelled, and so did everybody else. Then the showman got him away though half his coat was left.

"You little warmint!" he shouted. "What do you mean by it? If he'd got hold of you he'd have killed you in a minute. You had better monkey with the lion than with that Link. Get you out of this!"

There was a nice kind of grandfather to have! The showman never left go of Alfred till he had carried him outside and dropped him over the railings. He was screaming all the time. Jock and I watched the grandfather tearing up his coat in a rage for a little time, then we went out too.

### CHAPTER XI

#### WHAT WE DID AT THE FAIR

It took us a long time 'fore we could comfort Alfred. He kept sobbing and crying. The best way to comfort him is to talk 'bout things to eat, so when we said we were hungry he stopped, and said he was too. Jock and I hadn't enough money to do all we wanted and eat a lot, so we looked for something big which didn't cost much. We could only have a bun which was rather hard, and not nice, but there were so many things to be seen, and I wanted to buy a present for Cecil, and Jock one for Mr. Alan, so we couldn't spare much. But Alfred had heaps of money, and had a most lovely time with pea soup, and brandy snaps, and a cocoanut. We didn't want to stay and see him eat, and he didn't want to buy any presents, so Jock said we would go to the stalls, and come back for him. We knew it was safe to leave him; he would never stop eating so long as he had one little corner which wasn't full.

We looked at all the stalls, but I liked the jewelry one best. I couldn't make up my mind atween a bracelet, and a brooch, and a necklace. The lady b'longing to the stall was very kind. She said:

"Now, my advice is get a necklace. All ladies like necklaces, and there is more to be seen for the money. Would you like a pearl one, or a turquoise, or how do you like the emerald?"

I asked how much they were, and she said twopence ha'penny, and very good value for the money. They were beaut'ful.

"I should like a diamond. Do you keep those?"

She said 'no,' they couldn't be made for the price. So I looked at them all again and then chose one with large red stones—very handsome. She said they were rubies, and it was a bargain. Jock liked it too. I asked what that one cost, and she said it was robbing herself, but as it was me I could have it for twopence ha'penny, the same as the others. I was very much 'bliged to her, 'cause she hadn't known me long, and it was really good of her to rob herself for me. So she wrapped it up, and helped Jock to choose an emerald tie pin for Mr. Alan.

When we got back to Alfred he crammed the last bit of cocoanut into his mouth, and said, "What next?"

I wanted the Fat Woman, Jock the circus, and Alfred the Living Skeleton. Jock said I was a lady so we would see the Fat Woman first. We had to pay another penny, but it was well worth it. You never saw such a size! She had on a short skirt which showed her legs, and short sleeves which showed her arms, and a low dress which showed her neck. I never thought a woman could be so fat. We were too s'prised to speak. Then Alfred said it wasn't real; it was make up in some way. I don't know whether the gentleman who was pointing out the parts which were fattest heard him, but he said;

"Come, and touch her. See for yourselves, ladies and

gentlemen. All is correct and genuine here. No frauds in this 'stablishment."

So we went close, and the Fat Woman said, "Pinch me, little lady; and you will be able to say you have touched the fattest woman in the world."

I wouldn't pinch her, but I got hold of her hand gently, and it felt quite soft. It was no make up. It was truly her.

Then she told Jock to pinch, but he said a gentleman didn't pinch ladies, but he tried to get his hands round her arm and he couldn't.

" I'll pinch her," said Alfred, rudely.

And he did!

Though her hands were so soft they were heavy. She was too fat to get up quickly from her chair, but she wasn't too fat to scream loudly, nor too fat to hit Alfred so hard that she knocked him down.

Jock said it served him right. I thought so too.

"Don't you think it's nearly time we went home?" I asked. "Cecil hasn't come for us, and she said we weren't to be late."

"Oh, we haven't been long yet," said Jock, "and I do so want to see the circus. Listen to what that man is shouting. 'The most wonderful performing dogs on earth.' We oughtn't to miss such a chance; we might never get it again."

There was a lovely lady in a dress which didn't nearly come to her knees, and stuck out straight all round, and a big picture showing her jumping through a hoop on a horse's back. I very much wanted to see that.

"We must stay," said Alfred. "We can't have been here more than half an hour."

"Oh, Jock!" I said in dismay. "It is twopence to go in and I have only three ha'pennies left. What shall I do?"

"She'd better wait outside till we come back," said Alfred. "Why did you buy that bun, you greedy little thing, then you would have been all right."

"Greedy yourself!" said Jock angrily. "I've got some left, Dollie, I'll give you a ha'penny."

"Cecil doesn't like me taking money from anybody," I whispered, shyly.

"Then I'll give it to the man at the door, and that won't be you taking it. When this is over," whispered Jock, "we will find the horses, and ride the two million miles back to Sunnyside. There are such a lot of things to see, and it's a pity to miss them, but p'raps it would be better not to take 'vantage. Alan hates me to take 'vantage."

The circus began. It was the best thing in the whole fair. The lovely lady jumped through hoops, and over ribbons, and then a gentleman held up another hoop covered with paper, and she just gave a little slap to her horse with her whip, and shouted "Hi! and jumped straight through. We clapped till our hands were sore, and the lady got off the horse, and ran into the middle of the ring, and kissed her hands to us, and leaned over to one side, and then to the other, and a splendid gentleman with a long whip and a moustasche took hold of one of her hands, and bowed, and she gave little jumps and twiddled her toes, and he led her away, and she gave little jumps all the way out, and when she was near the door he brought her back, and she kissed her hands, and twiddled her toes again, and jumped out, and we didn't see her any more. I was sorry.

Then came the 'forming dogs, and their 'forming was wonderful. Jock liked them better than the lovely lady. He said he should try and teach Rex to dance in time to music, and p'raps Trip could learn to walk on a barrel, and roll it over.

After that a little boy walked on a wire, and stood on one leg on it, and waved a big paper umbrella, and did a lot of other astrordinary things. I can't 'member all we saw, but when it was over I was quite tired with clapping.

There was a big crowd getting out, and we were very much squeeged. It wasn't nice. But when we were out there was something much worse than a crowd. There was darkness! Lots and lots of gasses were lit and flared up high, but when we looked at the sky it was black, and when we looked for the mountains they weren't there.

Jock whistled softly. "Now we've done it! What will Alan say? Let's get out of this as fast as we can."

"Stop a bit! said Alfred quite eagerly. "There's a dancing bear. We must just see him.

Jock's eyes sparkled. "All right! but we must go then."

I didn't know how tired I was while we were in the circus, but I did when we came out. I didn't care a bit 'bout the bear."

"I want to go home, Jock," I said. "My feet ache all over."

"Go home, then," said Alfred. "That's the worst of girls; they are always tired, or something silly. Come on, Jock."

"Are you really too tired, Dollie?" asked Jock.
"It isn't far, and we won't stay more than a minute."

I sighed. "Well, I'll try, but there is rather a long way home."

Jock looked at me, then turned his back on the bear. "We'll go at once."

"I shan't," said Alfred. "Don't be silly, Jock! It's a brown one, and such a size. I must see it."

"Then you must go by yourself. You'd better come with us; you won't like to walk home alone."

Alfred grunted, and grumbled, and made nasty remarks, but he came; he didn't like to be left.

"We'll have to walk those two million miles," Jock whispered, laughing. "I guess we haven't time to ride them."

"I wish the people didn't crush so, Jock."

There was a very big crowd. In some parts we could hardly push our way through, and they were rough and noisy too. We walked along as best we could, but all the places seemed to be alike, and we couldn't find our way to the village.

- "I say, Alfred," said Jock, at last, "do you know where we are?"
- "Keep straight on, and we shall come to High Street."
- "That's just what I think we shan't do. I don't remember seeing that shooting place before."
- "But there are the horses that we rode on when first we came."
- "I don't b'lieve they're the same," I said. "There was only one black horse on the ones we rode, and there are four in a line there."
  - "We must ask," said Jock.

I felt uneasy. When one is enjoying oneself one does not always think of Cecil, but when one is tired and hungry one never forgets her for a minute. I held my ruby necklace tightly, and was glad I had bought her a present. As the people passed, shouting and laughing, I looked at every one and hoped it would be her come to meet us, but it never was.

Jock asked several people the way out but they didn't take any notice, and we didn't know what to do. At last a woman with a shawl over her head stopped and said, "High Street? You are on the opposite side to High Street. Go straight by those stalls, then turn up by the ghost show and you will be there; and look here, my lads, the sooner you get out of this and take that pretty tired little one home the better. It's no place for you here."

She smelt very nasty, and she looked very nasty, but she was kind. Cecil says we ought not to judge by what a person is outside. The inside may be very nice; one can never tell. This is the way it was with that woman. She was lame, and it made her not able to walk straight.

The crowd was crowdier than ever, and my eyes were tired of the glare, and my feet felt as though they were too big for my shoes, and wanted to come out at the end. What would Cecil say if they had grown so big I must have a size larger! It would be very aspensive.

At last we came to the end of the stalls, and passed the ghost show. Jock said there was a horrid picture, but I kept my head turned the other way. Then we were in High Street. It looked quite diffrent to what it was in the day time. When we came to the end of the street the lamps were further and further apart, and when they stopped it was quite dark—the kind of dark when one might as well shut one's eyes as keep them open.

Alfred stopped grumbling, and sounded quite perlite as he asked, "Do you know the way, Jock?"

"Hope so," said Jock. He was gloomy. "I was out once when it was as dark as this, but Alan and Mr. Franklin were with me, and it was fun. It isn't fun

It wasn't fun. We knocked into the hedge on one side, and then tumbled off the high path on to the road on the other. We couldn't see anything. When I held up my hand it mightn't have been there.

"Do you think we are struck blind?" asked Alfred, beginning to cry. "Shall we never see anything again?"

"No, I don't!" said Jock. "There has been nothing to strike us. I could see well enough if there was any light to see by. And I wouldn't be a cry baby, if I were you. Look at Dollie! She's smaller than we, and a girl too, and she doesn't cry."

I was doing it quietly to myself; it was so drefful to think of never seeing anything again, and having always to live in the dark; but when Jock said that I rubbed away the tears, and tried to be brave. But I was glad I wasn't a kitten.

"I wouldn't cry if I could look at Dollie," sobbed Alfred. "I don't like this. I want to be at home. I want mother."

"If only one little star would come out!" I said.
"With all the grillions we see sometimes just one might come."

We went on, falling down and picking ourselves up, and falling down again, but never letting go of each other. Once when we fell I didn't get up. Jock pulled my hand.

"Can't we sit still for one little minute, Jock. I am so dreffully tired. Just one little tiny minute."

Jock sat down by me. We weren't sitting on the grass, or on a stone, but anyhow in the path. What would Cecil have said if she could have seen me? It wasn't a bit proper, but we were too tired to care. I think I must have fallen asleep, but Jock wouldn't let me stay so.

"Wake up, Dollie. It isn't safe to sleep out of doors when you are lost. I read of one little boy who did and got frost bitten, and if they hadn't rubbed his hands and feet with snow they would have dropped off. There isn't any snow now, so you wouldn't have a chance."

I was so horrorfied at the idea of losing my hands and feet that I started off at once.

"We must have been rested by sitting still a bit, Jock. It is much easier walking now. It feels almost like down hill."

Jock stopped. "So it does. Wait a bit. I don't b'lieve we are going right. Where have we got to?"

"Oh, do come on!" said Alfred. "We can't be wrong. There is no other road to get into except the one down to the sea, and that is not on this side of the road, and is nearer the village. We must have passed it long ago."

"We're not right," said Jock. "We must have got up with our faces down hill, and now are walking away from Sunnyside."

Alfred began to cry again. "I don't b'lieve we are. Do you think we're lost? It's all your fault, Jock, for wanting to see the circus."

It was too bad to put all the blame on Jock. We had wanted to see it just as much, but I was too tired to quarrel. I was very s'prised too, to find how much braver Jock was than Alfred. Alfred had talked so much about not caring what his mother and father said that I thought he would have been 'fraid of nothing, and now he was being a baby, and Jock never cried at all.

- "We're going the wrong way," he 'peated.
- "We're not," said Alfred angrily.
- "Yes, we are; and I'm not going a step farther."

- "Well, I am."
- "You'll go by yourself, then."
- "Dollie, won't you come with me?" asked Alfred. "Which do you think is right?"
- I didn't know, and didn't care, but I was going to stick by Jock whatever happened. He was my chum.
- "Wait!" said Jock. "We can soon find out. Which side of us was the gutter? Yours, or Dollie's?"
  - " Mine," said Alfred.
  - "Then move carefully, and see if it's there now."

Alfred shuffled his feet first one way and then the other, and at last got to the hedge. "We may have changed hands."

"No, we haven't," I said. "I have Cecil's necklace in the same hand as at first. I have never let go."

So we turned round, and began slowly struggling uphill again.

- "Do you think we are going to die out in the dark 'cause we were naughty, and didn't go home in time, Jock?" I whispered.
- "I don't know," said Jock. His voice was just a little trembly, and he had to cough once. "I hope not, Dollie. We must be brave."
- "I'm not," said Alfred, rather more hopefully. "The gipsy said I should be rich, and live a long time, so I am all right, but you two may. She said Dollie would have a miserable life, and Jock come to a bad end."

I was too sleepy to care much. If only Jock would have let me lie down I shouldn't have minded what happened, but he wouldn't. I didn't even mind about losing my hands and feet. What would be the good of them if we were to die? Presently Jock offered to carry me a bit. He grabbed me round the middle; all my dress was crumpled, and he squeeged hard, but I went

to sleep at once, and only waked when he fell into the gutter again.

"Look! look!" he said, as we dragged ourselves up.
"A light! It's moving. Shout!"

We had scarcely any voices left, but we called out, "Oh, help us! Please somebody find us."

The light stopped, and someone shouted back, "Jock, is that you?"

"It's Alan," whispered Jock.

He couldn't say another word.

On came the light. It was a bicycle lamp. Mr. Alan was carrying it. "Are you all there? All safe? Where have you been?"

"To the fair, Alan," said Jock, shading his eyes from the light, and clenching his teeth very hard atween his words. "We are late—I'm sorry. We intended—being back—before you—came home."

"To the fair? If you had to get into mischief couldn't you manage it without dragging a delicate little girl into trouble. I am ashamed of you, Jock. I thought I could have trusted you."

Mr. Alan's voice was dreffully stern.

I heard Jock give a gulp, and pant, "Oh, Alan!" but Mr. Alan took no notice. He picked me up, and took Alfred's hand. "Catch hold of Jock," he said, and I didn't know any more till Cecil cried out:

"What is it? Oh, Dollie! Is she hurt, is she-"

I rubbed my eyes. We were in Sunnyside. Cecil was very white.

"She's all right, Miss Sinclair, only tired out. I'll carry her upstairs for you."

Alfred's mother was crying over him. Jock was standing by himself with his eyes on Mr. Alan who didn't look at him.

# WHAT WE DID AT THE FAIR

The rest of the time was only in little bits. I 'member lying on Cecil's lap and having spoonfuls of bread and milk put in my mouth, and I 'member her putting my nightgown on, and I think I gave her the ruby necklace, but that is all.

### CHAPTER XII

#### WE ARE PUNISHED

When I woke up again my legs felt very tired—dreffully tired—worse than they often did when I had been playing all day, and very stiff 'bout the knees. It is s'prising to wake up and be so tired that one thinks it ought to be time to go to bed again. Then I was very hungry—so hungry that I tried to' member what I had had for tea, 'cause my inside felt as though it hadn't had anything. Then the fair and the walk in the dark came into my head, and I knew all about it.

Cecil stood by my bed, and said very gravely, "Are you awake now, Dollie. Get up and dress."

I scrambled up, "Good morning, Cis!" and was going to throw my arms round her neck and give her a kiss.

She moved away. "No! I can't kiss such a naughty little girl."

Then I knew I was in trouble.

I got up almost in silence. It is no fun dressing when Cecil sits and reads all the time, and takes no notice of one, and doesn't say, "Hurry, little one!" and "Come,

Dollie, don't play," or "Are you making that dress, baby, or only putting it on?" and things of that kind.

I only spoke once till I was ready. "Has Dick gone, Cecil?"

"Yes; long ago."

I was glad. Dick's punishments are a lot worse than Cecil's, and if she gave me one while he was away he wouldn't give another one when he came back, even if he didn't think hers was enough. It wouldn't be fair.

When I was ready Cecil went downstairs, and presently brought a big basin of bread and milk and some dry bread. Then I knew I was a very naughty girl. When one is dry bread bad, it is ser'us. But I was so hungry it tasted nicer than bacon and marmarlade does sometimes. P'raps I ought to have told Cecil, but when a grown up doesn't speak, and when one looks at them they stare straight past as though somebody was ahind one it makes one afraid to say anything.

When I had finished every scrap Cecil said, "You may have more dry bread if you like, Dollie."

I said, "No, thank you," as perlitely as poss'ble.

"Then, if you have finished come and tell me what you did yesterday. No; not on my lap. Sit there."

There, was the edge of a high chair. It was uncomferable. It wasn't the chair itself which was so bad, but the inside of my mind. I told Cecil all we had seen and done. At first she sat still and looked sadly at me, but when I got to Alfred's grandfather, and the Fat Woman, she jumped up and leaned out of the window, and took out her pocket hankershiff. She was deeply grieved. She was shaking all over, and her voice was trembly when she spoke. She was crying. Dearest Cecil crying! 'Cause I had been bad. When I finished I asked;

"Did I give you the ruby necklace, Cis? I bought it for you."

"It is in that drawer. But I don't want a present, Dollie. It would have been a better present if you had not been naughty and caused me all that anxiety."

"Have you seen it, Cecil?"

"Yes."

I couldn't say anything else. She had seen that beaut'ful, beaut'ful necklace, and was so angry she wouldn't take it. That is such a nasty thing 'bout grown ups. If they are cross with one they won't take a present. I don't like it if people are unkind, but I take what they give me all the same. It is me who would have to go athout if 1 didn't, not the other one, and what would be the good of that?

Cecil sat on a chair, and began to talk. "You have been a very naughty girl, Dollie."

"Yes, Cis, very naughty."

"And have caused a great deal of trouble. I looked everywhere for you, and as soon as Dick had a little tea he went out too, and so did Mrs. Garland, and Mr. Franklin, and Mr. Dalton, and a great many others."

"I'm glad Mr. Dalton didn't find us. I don't like him."

"He was very kind," said Cecil severely. "He went with me ever so far, and tried to comfort me."

"By yourself, Cis?" I asked, thinking of the Princess Play. I haven't said much 'bout it lately, partly 'cause it wasn't quite a success, and Jock says he doesn't like to talk about things which don't succeed, and partly 'cause there have been such a lot of other things to tell, and partly 'cause of the horrid hydra, and some other partlys too. But I was sorry we had been faithless guards, and the Enemy had taken 'vantage.

- "What do you mean?" asked Cecil sharply.
- "Did you and Mr. Dalton go by yourselves? Was no one else with you?"
  - "No. What of that?"
  - "Nothing," I said sadly.

Jock would be sorrier than I was. He was more intrested in his play, and 'sides didn't like being beaten.

- "I shall have to punish you, Dollie."
- "I s'pose so, Cis. Something 'sides the dry bread breakfast?"
- "I thought of letting you have nothing but dry bread and water all day, but it is disagreeable for other people to see a little girl in trouble."
- "Oh, Cecil!" I said anshusly. "Couldn't you poss'bly think of anything else? It would be so drefful for every one to know I was a little punishment girl. I would rather have something much worse that was private."
- "I am not exactly trying to find a punishment which you will like, Dollie, you know."
- "It's more diff'cult to know what to do here than at home, isn't it? What have you 'cided on, Cis?"
- "I shall give you a lesson to learn, and until it is done you mustn't play games, or go walks, or do anything nice."
  - "Not poetry; you don't mean poetry?"
- I hate poetry. It is silly. It never says things straight on, and often one doesn't know what it means, and people are so shocked if one misses words, and if one puts them in they laugh at one.
  - "Yes-poetry."

I sighed deeply. If I were poetry bad as well as dry bread bad things must be in a state.

"But my poetry book is at home. 'Less you brought it for fear of accidents."

"You will have to learn out of one of mine. It is the only one I have here."

Grown up poetry! Childern's poetry was bad enough, but grown up's was ten times worse. I can't think how people can like it. Gentlemen used to read it sometimes to Cecil. She is very perlite so never tells them to stop. No gentlemen shall read poetry to me when I am a grown up lady. Some of them even used to make it up out of their heads 'bout her. It was very queer stuff. They may make it up 'bout me if they like, so long as they don't want me to read it.

"You must learn these two verses," said Cecil.

""But the consul's brow was sad,
And the consul's speech was low,
And darkly looked he at the bridge
And darkly at the foe.
Their van will be upon us
Before the bridge goes down,
And if they once may win the bridge
What hope to save the town?

"Then out spake brave Horatius,
The captain of the gate,
'To every man upon this earth
Death cometh soon or late.
And how can man die better
Than facing fearful odds
For the ashes of his fathers
And the temples of his gods?'"

I counted the lines. There were sixteen. I must have been bad. Cecil read them to me two or three times, and told me all the hard words, and then we went out into the garden. On the way I took hold of her hand and gave it a squeege, but it hung down quite straight, and didn't take any notice, not even when I kissed it softly.

The tears came into my eyes and I tried not to cry. It is great suffring when dear Cecil will not be friends.

We sat down on a chair and the grass; Cecil was on the chair, and I on the grass. I wanted to talk, but she said she didn't wish to have anything more to do with me till I knew the lesson, and if I were sorry I should prove it by doing what she wished as quickly as poss'ble.

So I opened the book and spread it out, and read the first line.

### "" But the consul's brow was sad," "

A pretty yellow butterfly came floating over the grass. I should have liked to run after it, but daren't. It came close to the ground, and then high up in the air; then it sat down on a bush so low that if only I could have gone to it it would have been easy to reach. Then it flew higher and higher till it was out of sight.

### " But the consul's brow was sad,""

The kitties' mother was walking past with something in her mouth. Was it a dear little mouse, or worse still a dickie bird?

#### "' But the consul's brow was sad," "

Mr. Franklin strolled up one of the paths. He stopped when he saw Cecil, but she didn't see him, so he walked away. I was glad. He might have asked what I was doing. I looked at the book again, then found seven stones, and put them on one side of me. I said

### " But the consul's brow was sad," "

and put a stone to the other side; then read it again, and put another, and again till the whole seven were moved. Then I read the second line,

### " ' And the consul's speech was low," "

and worked the stones back again. I shut the book and

tried to think, but the first line was gone. I couldn't think of one word. It was truly diff'cult.

Jock came slowly walking along the lawn. He didn't run and jump as usual, and his face was very grave and sad. He took off his hat perlitely, he never forgot to be a gentleman, and I bowed like Cecil does, but he didn't speak, only sat down on the grass by me, and began picking blades of grass and biting them. After a while he asked:

- "What are you doing?"
- "Learning my punishment," I whispered. "Have you one?"
  - "I have had mine. Alan whipped me."
  - "Oh, Jock! Oh, poor Jock!"

Jock shook himself. "I don't mind that. A whipping's nothing." He was silent for a little then said suddenly, "But Alan's angry yet. He won't forgive me. He won't be chums. He said he couldn't trust methat I wasn't telling the truth; and I was!—I was!—I don't tell lies."

- "Won't forgive you now the punishment's over?" I asked, with wide opened eyes.
  - "No; he says I'm not speaking the truth."
- "How—why—what?" I asked. "We were naughty to be late, you know, Jock, but there is nothing to tell any truth 'bout."
- "He doesn't care much about that he says. Anybody might forget the time when they were enjoying themselves though they would have to be punished to make them member another time. But it's not that."
  - "What is it, then?"
- "He says I had no business to go at all, and when I told him Miss Cecil said you could go and I thought he wouldn't mind me doing what you did he was angry and

said it wasn't the truth, and that Miss Cecil never gave leave. He won't believe me. He said he was ashamed of me, and—and—it's not fair! It's Alan, and he isn't fair—he isn't fair! I don't mind the whipping—he can whip me again—I told him so—but he wasn't fair!"

Poor Jock hugged his knees and stared straight 'fore him. He didn't cry, but if he had done he wouldn't have been a bit more mis'rubble. He really and truly didn't seem to care 'bout the whipping but he kept whispering, "It's Alan! my Alan—and he isn't fair. He's always been fair, but he isn't now."

I knelt up and put my arms round his neck and tried to comfort him, but he shook his head. "I must mind, Dollie. He's all I have in the wide world; you don't know how I love him. He ought to b'lieve me. It's not fair. It wouldn't matter if it were anyone but Alan. He says it's not true."

- "But it isn't really a hole, you know, Jock." I 'minded him eagerly. "It doesn't go through. You know, and I know, and the Great King knows."
- "I want Alan to know," whispered Jock, biting his lips hard. "There! don't talk about it any more. What is your punishment?"
- "Poetry," I said sadly, slipping down again and opening the book. "Two verses—sixteen lines—sixteen, lock."
- "Poetry! Oh! that's easy enough. Poetry learns itself."
- "Jock! It doesn't! It is harder than anything. I'd rather have spelling, or dates and things."
- "Would you? Dates? I hate them! What can it matter whether William I began to reign in 1066 or 1087, and what can help you to 'member? But poetry

-poetry has a tale, and it sings,—you can't miss out words in poetry 'cause it wouldn't sound right."

"I can't bear it! And I can't learn this piece. It's horrid!"

"Here, give it me. I'll teach you. What is it about?"

"Would Cecil let you? I don't want to be naughty again."

"Ask her."

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I crawled along the grass, and pulled her dress. "Cis, may Jock help me with my poetry?"

"Certainly, if he is so kind."

"It's all right, Jock," I said joyfully. "There! That's where I begin."

"What's it about?" asked Jock turning to the beginning.

"I don't know. I don't care. Never mind that. All I want is to know my two verses."

"But it's as easy again if you know what the tale is. Let's look a few verses back anyhow. If you look at the first lines you can usually tell whether they are 'portant or not."

It seemed a great waste of time, but I said nothing.

"It's a fight, I b'lieve," said Jock turning over the pages, and running his finger down the verses. "It's a battle. Listen, Dollie.

' Just then a scout came flying All wild with haste and fear.'

Do you know what a scout is?"

"No; and I don't want to know, Jock. I want to learn my punishment. I don't care a bit what it means, or what it's 'bout."

"But you must know before you can learn. A person can't learn anything without understanding it. A scout is a man who goes before an army and finds where the

enemy are. He has to go as softly as posible, and as soon as he knows he scoots back to tell the others. That's why he's called a scout."

- "But scoot and scout aren't the same thing," I 'jected.
- "There's not much difference, though. And I know I'm right 'cause I asked Alan once, and he laughed a lot and said, 'Old man, you are A1 at definitions.' I don't know what definitions are, but it was all right."

Jock had been talking eagerly, and was quite happy, but now he dropped the book and looked mis'rubble. "I wish I hadn't 'membered that. It's made me think of Alan again, and I don't want to think of him. It's horrid not to want to think of your own Alan."

It must have been.

- "But I must learn the poetry, Jock. Let me have it."
- "All right. I'll go on. Let's see. I'll just read your verses now. What on earth's this word? H—o—hor—a—t—rati—u—s, what does i—u—s spell, Dollie?"
- "Let me look. Oh! that's Horatius. I b'lieve he's a gentleman."
- "Horatius? Is it Horatius? I know about him. I can tell you. It's a jolly poem. Some of our fellows learned it for an exam. It's about—"
- "Jock! I want to learn my punishment, I tell you. Cecil will be angry soon. Give me the book if you won't help me. It's just waste of time."
  - "I will, Dollie; don't be cross. What's the first line?

    But the consul's brow was sad.'

I don't quite know what a consul is. I b'lieve he's a kind of mayor. I saw one once with a long chain and things."

- "A consul?" I asked.
- "No, a mayor.

<sup>&#</sup>x27;But the consul's brow was sad.'

I think it would have been better if it had been the consul's face. It isn't very easy to make your forehead look sad. P'raps it means he wrinkled it. That's 'cause the other army is coming to fight against his town.

'And the consul's speech was low,'

He was frightened, you know. People always speech low when they are afraid.

'And darkly looked he at the bridge,'

Where's a bridge? Pass Miss Cecil's parasol. Look! I'll lay it across the path. That'll do. This is how to look darkly."

Jock folded his arms and scowled at the parasol—I mean the bridge. It was the kind of scowl which makes one want to ask, 'You're not really and truly cross, are you, Jock?' but he didn't give me any time. He went on in a hurry.

"The reason why was 'cause there was no way to get into the town 'cept by the bridge, and he was afraid they wouldn't have time to break it down before the foe came close. That's the reason that

> 'Darkly looked he at the bridge, And darkly at the foe.'

Those people over there are the foe."

Jock shaded his eyes and glared at them, frowning so that I was 'fraid they would think he was rude, and say things. But fortunately they were reading, and didn't see. They didn't know they were the foe.

> "' Their van will be upon us Before the bridge goes down.'

The van was where they kept their guns, and pistols, and swords, and clubs, and 'course if it came up close the soldiers could grab them and fight.

'And if they once can win the bridge What hope to save the town?'

Oh! it's awfully easy. Let's read it over again, and we'll nearly know it."

He began again, and acted it all wrinkling his forehead, and scowling at the para—I mean the bridge—and the people—at least, the foe—and thumping one fist into the other hand, and asking

> 'And if they once can win the bridge What hope to save the town?'

in a queer shaky voice, as though he was almost crying at the bare thought. It was nearly like a game. I began to get 'cited. I didn't know poetry was like that, but Jock always made things int'resting.

"I know it now," he said. "Hear me, Dollie."

And he did—athout one mistake.

"Let me," I said. "I know all 'bout it too, Jock. 'And the consul's brow was sad, and he speeched softly, and looked darkly at the bridge and the foe."

Jock threw down the book, and laughed quite ever so loud. "You're not saying poetry, Dollie. You're telling the tale. It doesn't sing a bit that way. Begin again."

"I don't know what you mean by singing," I said, nearly crying. It was so dis'pointing when I thought I knew it, but that's the way with poetry. It does not speak straight.

"Don't mind, Dollie. I won't laugh. You've got the idea, and the words will soon come, but you mustn't put in too many words, or too few; it doesn't sound right."

With a very little more helping, and Jock acting the words and me saying them, I got that verse, and we went on to the next.

"' Then out spake brave Horatius
The Captain of the Gate,'

This is the gate," said Jock, balancing our two hats together, and lying down to peep through at the foe. "What did he say? Oh! here's the place.

'To every man upon this earth Death cometh soon or late.'"

He shut the book, and asked 'pressively,

"' And how can man die better Than facing fearful odds '''

"I don't know. How can he, Jock?"

"It's the poetry that's asking," said Jock.

I grabbed the book. I didn't b'lieve it I never heard poetry ask a straight question 'fore. But it was there.

#### " For the ashes of his fathers'

What's the 'ashes of his fathers'?" asked Jock. "I never heard of such a thing. Gentlemen don't have ashes."

- "P'raps it means mothers, Jock. Mother sometimes sweeps the ashes out of our grate."
- "But Horatius wouldn't want to die in order to save his mother's ashes."
  - "P'raps it means ashes of his pipe," I said hopefully.
- "I don't think anyone would die for that either. I must ask Alan."
- "Go on," I said in a hurry. I didn't want him to think of Mr. Alan again. "Is that the last line? Do go on, Jock."
  - "There's one more.

# 'And the temples of his gods,'

There's some sense in dying so that people shan't knock down your churches. This verse isn't so good to act as the other."

It wasn't. But I did my best, and Jock did his best, and it was almost quite int'resting, and presently I stood up, and put my hands ahind my back and said proudly:

"I know my punishment, Cecil."

Cecil must have been reading a funny book. She was laughing, and trying not to. But she heard me, and I got through with only one help where I said 'ashes of his mothers.'

"Is it all right now, Cecil," I asked. "I am very sorry. I'll never be so naughty again. Will you kiss me now, and forgive me?"

So Cecil took me on her lap and loved me till I was quite happy again.

#### CHAPTER XIII

#### WE ARE FORGIVEN

Jock had leaned up on the grass and was very int'rested while I said my poetry, but when Cecil began to love me he turned away. He had been so 'cited over the poetry that he had forgotten 'bout Mr. Alan, but now he 'membered again. I slipped off Cecil's lap and sat down by him.

"P'raps he'll forget and be friends again soon, Jock," I whispered.

"I don't want him to forget. I want him to know I told the truth. Miss Cecil has forgiven you all right; but then she was only angry with you for being late."

Jock sat still thinking deeply. At last he whispered, "Dollie, do you think Miss Cecil would mind telling Alan that she did say we might go; do you think she would? He would b'lieve her."

"I don't know. She might. One can never tell what a grown up will do."

"I wish you would ask her. She is very kind, isn't she?"

"The kindest poss'ble," I said proudly. "A lot kinder than Dick, but I don't quite like to ask. She always says it isn't the time to ask favours when one has just been very naughty."

Jock was so dis'pointed that I had to try, so scrambled up and hugged her arm. "Cecil, dearest!"

"Well?" said Cecil, athout looking up from her-book.

"Cecil, do you mind listening? Mr. Alan is very angry with Jock."

"I'm afraid he deserves it," said Cecil quite gravely.
"I don't excuse you, Dollie, but Jock is older, and ought to have known even better."

"But he has been punished," I pleaded, while Jock grew very red.

"I can't be more than sorry, Miss Cecil," he said, anshusly.

"Of course you can't," said Cecil, kindly. "I oughtn't to say anything, Jock, especially as your brother has punished you, but I never thought you would have led Dollie into naughtiness."

"It was the circus," asplained Jock, sadly. "If it hadn't been for that we should have been home early. But it was quite my fault, I know."

"I wanted to go too, Cecil." It wasn't fair to Jock not to tell that. "But Mr. Alan isn't so angry with him for being late, but for going at all. Dearest Cecil, would you mind telling him you gave us leave to go, then he would forgive Jock?"

Cecil looked quite shocked. "No indeed! I couldn't tell him anything of the kind. I am ashamed of you for thinking of such a thing, Dollie."

I felt red and hot all over, and left go and turned away. "I don't like Cecil to be 'shamed of me," I

sobbed trying to find my hankershiff and speaking very softly 'cause I didn't want her to know I was crying. "It's horrid!"

"I know it is," 'greed Jock, offering me his. "And it's horrid for Alan not to be able to trust me. But I needn't have got you into trouble. I wish I hadn't asked you to ask her. Don't cry, Dollie. Alfred's coming."

"Don't let him laugh at me," I begged. "I can't bear to be laughed at. I hope he won't."

Jock sat up. His eyes were all sparkly, and his lips pressed together. "I hope he will, and then I can fight him. I should love a good fight. I b'lieve I'd feel a lot better if only I could thump someone hard."

- "Are you coming to play?" asked Alfred.
- "No, we're not, so there!"
- "Are you being punished?"
- "We have been. What have you to say about that?"

"It's a shame!" said Alfred, perlitely. "A great shame! Shall you be long? I'm just going up there; you might come after you have finished."

He ran away quickly. Jock was dis'pointed. "That's just the way things are. If you want a fight and try to be nasty, the other fellow won't have it; and if you don't want one and be as nice as possible, before you know where you are he is hitting you. Things are queer. I should even like to meet the hydra just now I b'lieve, but I don't feel quite sure of that."

He must have felt bad.

This 'minded me of something. "Oh! Jock, we have been faithless guards. Mr. Dalton was with Cecil ever so long yesterday all by their two selves."

I thought Jock would have been very sorry, but it

shows how mis'rubble he was. He only said, "Was he? Well, it can't be helped. I don't care much. Games aren't interesting when Alan is angry. I wonder why Miss Cecil wouldn't tell him. Do you think it was 'cause it would be a bother to go and find him. She needn't. I'd get him like a shot, and bring him here. Do you think that was the reason, Dollie? I wish I dare ask again."

"Oh, I wouldn't, Jock. Wait till she has got over this crossness. She might feel better after dinner."

"But I can't wait. Alan is going away soon for the whole of the rest of the day, and I want him to be friends first."

"Where is he going? Doesn't he often go away?"

"Business. You see, it's this way. The doctor said he was thoroughly knocked up, and pulled down."

"How can a person be knocked up, and pulled down at the same time?"

"I don't know, but Alan can. He is cleverer than most people. Anyhow the doctor told him to come here for the summer, and if he had to attend business go back for odd days, and sleep in the fresh air. Alan didn't like to send me to boarding school, and thought a term's holiday wouldn't do any harm, so he brought me here too. But I want to be friends before he goes. I wonder if I dare. She couldn't kill me. There is a lot of comfort in that, Dollie. Do you ever think when people are angry, 'They daren't kill me?' It's a great help."

Jock sat still frowning hard for what felt like a very long time, but p'raps it wasn't. Time is cur'us. Sometimes five minutes feels as long as an hour, and sometimes an hour feels as short as five minutes. It all depends. At last he got up and held himself very straight

like he does when he is a bit afraid, and has to get over it 'cause of having a brother Alan.

He went to Cecil and touched her arm. "Miss Cecil, please don't be angry with me for worrying you, but can't you tell Alan you gave us leave to go? He is very angry, and you don't know how mis'rubble it is to have him angry. Can't you?"

Cecil sat up and said gravely. "No; it is impossible. How can you ask such a thing, Jock? I'm afraid you are a naughty boy."

I thought Jock would have given in at that, but he told me afterwards he was so wretched that a little bit more didn't make any diff'rence.

"Is it 'cause of the bother, Miss Cecil? I don't want you to go to him. I could find him and bring him here."

"No, it's not the bother," said Cecil sharply. "But I can't possibly tell a story to get you out of trouble, Jock. I am afraid you are not a good companion for Dollie if—'

"I don't want you to tell a story," said Jock quite angrily. "It would be worse to get another person to do it than to do it yourself. I don't want you to do anything but just tell Alan you gave us leave. Oh! do, Miss Cecil, please. I'll do anything you want—anything—if only you will explain. Please—please—."

Poor Jock was nearly choking. He tried hard not to show it, but tears were coming into his eyes, and he was forced to turn away to hide them. I was so sorry I forgot to be 'fraid, and clasped my arms round Cecil's neck.

"Do, Cecil, do. Just tell him you did let us go, only we were not to stay late. We were naughty, I know, to be so long, but—"

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"But it's not fair," burst out Jock. "It's not fair to say you didn't give us leave. Do tell him. Oh, don't be angry, and do tell him, Miss Cecil, please."

"Can't you, Cecil? Jock loves him so much, and it is painful not to be friends with your brother."

Cecil looked first at Jock, and then at me. She was puzzled. "I don't understand."

When grown ups don't understand they gen'rally say, 'Get away, child, don't bother me. I don't know a bit what you are talking about,' and they seem to consider it is our fault, as if we weren't asplaining all the time. But dearest Cecil wasn't that kind. She put her arm round me, and said gently, "What do you mean, Dollie? I never gave you leave to go."

- "But you did, Cecil!" I asclaimed. "Don't you member?"
  - "You really did, Miss Cecil," said Jock, anshusly.
- "I should not have thought of such a thing, children. It wasn't a fit place for you by yourselves. I don't even know that I should have cared to take you without Dick."
- "But, Cecil, you sent my jacket and said you would come after us—"
- "And that we weren't to be late, anyhow, Miss Cecil."
- "What do you mean? I don't remember ever speaking about the fair. In fact I couldn't have done so, for I didn't know there was one."
- "But, Cecil, indeed we didn't go athout leave. Jock said he wouldn't and Alfred said he was a baby, and as bad as a girl."
  - "Do you mean you thought I said you might go?"
- "Yes, 'course you did. Are you 'membering now, Cis?"

"Then why do you think I have been punishing you, Dollie?"

"For staying so late when you told us to be early. We were very naughty, but we're sorry, aren't we lock? Alfred told us we weren't to stay long."

"Now, what on earth has Alfred to do with it I should like to know?"

"He asked you, Cis."

" Asked me what?"

"If we might go, and you said 'no' at first, and then 'yes, for a little.'"

"Tell me all about it from the beginning," said Cecil. So we both told, and when we came to the end Cecil said, slowly, "I begin to understand."

"And will you tell Alan?" asked, Jock eagerly. "So that he will chum with me again?"

"Perhaps I will, sometime."

"Oh, don't say 'sometime,' Miss Cecil. Say 'now.' He is going away till to-night, and I don't want to be unhappy all the afternoon. Please say 'yes.' You don't know how horrid it is when Alan is angry with you."

"No, I don't," said Cecil laughing. "Is it very bad, Jock?"

"I dare say you wouldn't mind if he were," said Jock sorrowfully. "And grown ups don't get angry with each other, 'course; but when he is all you have in the world—"

"Poor little lad!" said Cecil, very kindly. "Well, I suppose I must do it, but I don't like chasing all over after him."

"You needn't," said Jock eagerly. "I should never think of bothering you like that. I know where he is—in the smoking room. I'll ask him to come."

Cecil didn't seem to like it at all. "Very well," she

said slowly. "But you needn't shout, you know, Jock. You don't want every one to know you have been punished."

"I don't. I'll just whisper quietly. I am most awfully 'bliged to you, Miss Cecil. Wait till I can do anything for you, and then you'll see."

"Don't you like it, Cecil?" I asked, when Jock had run off. "Aren't you comferable in your inside?"

"No, I'm not, Dollie. It isn't pleasant to interfere in another person's business. I don't know what Mr. McKenzie will think of me."

"But you are doing a noble action, Cis, and oughtn't to mind a little ill-convenience."

Cecil laughed, and pulled my hair. "Dollie, moral remarks are intended for the benefit of juveniles, and not to be repeated to your elders and betters in moments of affliction."

Juveniles are children, and elders and betters are grown ups. This is another of those things which childern haven't to do, and grown ups have.

Presently Mr. Alan came striding along very fast with Jock scampering after him. His face was all flushed, and his eyes bright. He took off his cap. "My little chap says you wish to speak to me, Miss Sinclair. Can I do anything for you in town? It would be a great pleasure."

Cecil shook her head, and got rosy. Cecil always looks sweet, but she is sweeter than sweet when she is rosy like that. "I think it would be more correct to say that Jock wishes me to speak to you. He begged so hard that I couldn't refuse, but I fear you will think me rather interfering."

"I should think nothing you could say or do would be interfering," said Mr. Alan.

He was most perlite.

Cecil grew still rosier. "You see, Dollie is in it as well which must be my excuse. I am afraid—or perhaps I had better say—I hope we have made a mistake. The children seem to have either misunderstood, or been misled. They both declare I gave them leave to go to the fair."

"I know," said Mr Alan sternly. "That is why I punished Jock. I can't understand it. He has always been truthful before."

Jock grew white. "And I am now, Alan. You are not—you are not fair."

Jock shivered all over, but he looked straight into Mr. Alan's eyes. I got fast hold of Cecil's hand. It was a drefful thing to say to one's big grown up brother. What would he do next?

But Mr. Alan wasn't angry. He only got rather white too, and said quietly. "Not fair? Am I not, Jock? I shall be very glad if it is so. I hate to think you are not to be trusted. Did you give permission, Miss Sinclair? Surely it's not possible?"

"No," said Cecil. "But I think there has been some mistake. May I explain?"

Jock and I listened while she told all 'bout Alfred asking and her letting us go, only she seemed to say she didn't, either. It was very puzzling. We couldn't make it out. If she was only going to say she hadn't done what was the good of sending for Mr. Alan? Jock would be in worse trouble than ever. When she finished Mr. Alan pulled his moustache for a few minutes. Then he said, "Then you think—" He stopped there.

Dearest Cecil took hold of my hand and patted it. " I can trust my little Dollie," she said. It was sweet of her! I rubbed my cheek against her shoulder and made

up my mind never to do another naughty thing as long as I lived.

Mr. Alan said, "Jock, do you know where Alfred is?"

"Yes, Alan."

"Bring him here, old chap, and be quick. I haven't much time."

Jock rushed away looking almost quite happy again 'cause Mr. Alan smiled, and said 'old chap.'

"I expect you are right, Miss Sinclair," he said. "I'm very glad. My poor little man! I am ever so much obliged to you. I'm all the boy has, and though we pull along all right there are times when I badly need help. He's only a little one, after all, and it's difficult not to either be too sharp or spoil him. Hullo! What's that?"

We could hear Alfred talking. "I'm not going any further. Mr. Alan wants me, does he? Let him want then."

"Remarkable youth, that!" said Mr. Alan, jumping up.
"That's a thing, young man, that I have a great objection to doing if it can be avoided. In the present case it can. Come here! I want to ask a few questions."

He had hold of Alfred's collar, and was holding it tightly. Alfred wriggled, and twisted.

"Do take care, Mr. McKenzie," said Cecil. "Mind he doesn't bite."

"Stand still!" said Mr. Alan, giving him a shake, and then smiling at Cecil. "Listen to me. Your presence is required here for a few minutes, and I should think you don't very often hear anyone say that, so make the most of it. I want to ask you something."

"Shan't answer!"

"Oh, yes, you will! And let me tell you this. It's no

good screaming, because, unfortunately for you, your father and mother have gone to the village, so there is no one to interefere however much I hurt you. Now will you stand still?"

Alfred did. He stopped struggling, and said, "Take your knuckles out of my neck, then. What do you want?"

- "What have you been telling Jock and Dollie that Miss Sinclair said?"
  - "She never said anything."
- "I didn't ask that. I know it. What did you say she said?"
  - "I never asked her anything."
  - "I know that too. What did you say you asked her?"
- "I didn't say anything about her. She's nothing to do with me."
- "That's something to be thankful for. Who suggested going to the fair?"
  - " Jock."
  - "Oh, Alan!" said Jock.
- "What did he say?" asked Mr. Alan, taking no notice of Jock.
  - "Said, 'Let's go to the fair '."
  - "What did you say?"
  - "'All right.'"
  - "Who suggested Dollie going?"
- "Jock. I didn't want her. Don't like girls bothering about. Take your knuckles out."
- "And you offered to ask Miss Sinclair if she could go?"
- "No, I didn't. It didn't matter to me. What should I ask for? I didn't want her."
- "Where did you go when you left Jock putting by his things?"

- "For my money. It's no good going to a fair without money."
  - "Where do you keep it?"
  - "In my room."
- "Then what made you go to the tennis court afterwards?"
  - " I didn't."
  - "Miss Sinclair saw you."
- "Well, I mean, I wanted to speak to mother. Take your knuckles out. You are hurting me."
  - "What did you want to say to her?"
  - "To ask her if I might go."
  - "Did you ask her?"
  - "Yes."
  - " At the tennis court?"
  - "Yes. Let me go."
- "How is it that she didn't know where you were, then, at night?"
- "I don't know. P'raps she had forgotten. She says she has a dreadful memory."
  - "She must have!"
- Mr. Alan looked at Cecil who shook her head. "Mrs. Delancy was not at the tennis all that afternoon. She was out driving."
- "You'd better be careful, young man. It seems to me your statements want piecing together better. Where did you find Dollie's jacket?"
  - "I didn't find it. She had it on."
  - "How had she got it?"
- "I don't know. I s'pose she had been to the house for it"
- "I had taken it to the tennis lawn," said Cecil gravely, "in case we went on the hills later."
  - "Well, she must have taken it from there, then."

- "She couldn't have done so without my seeing her."
- "Yes, she could. You never saw me take it, so why need you have seen her?"
  - "So you did take it?" asked Mr. Alan.
- "Well, she asked me to. Don't squeeze! You hurt!"
  - "Why did you say you didn't?
  - "I meant I didn't take it of my own accord."
- "In order to relieve their doubts in case they feared Miss Sinclair hadn't really given permission, I suppose. Very clever, I must say!"
- "I can always think of things like that," said Alfred proudly. "Mother says there is no being up to my cunning."
  - "Then you did tell them Miss Sinclair had consented?"
  - "Take your knuckles out!" yelled Alfred.
- Mr. Alan left go. Alfred immejitly bolted off, and never stopped running till he was out of sight.
- Mr. Alan looked at his watch. "I say! Excuse me, Miss Sinclair, please. You must let me thank you afterwards. Jock, would you like to see me off at the station, old fellow? We must run."

Cecil nodded, and smiled, and said, "Good morning. I hope you will not lose the train."

Mr. Alan took off his cap once, but Jock kept taking it off all the way as long as he was in sight he was so happy at being friends again, and so thankful to Cecil. I couldn't understand it. Alfred had told a lot of big stories, and made them think we were naughtier than we had been, and yet Mr. Alan seemed to have forgiven Jock, and when they had quite gone Cecil lifted me on her lap, and gave me a kiss, and said:

"Poor little woman! Did you think it was a hard

- "What does it mean, Cis? Haven't we been so bad?"
  - "I think it was more Alfred's fault than yours."
- "But, Cecil, didn't you tell Mr. Alan you hadn't let us go. Why has he got friends again with Jock?"
- "Don't you see, Dollie. Alfred never asked me, but made up that I said 'Yes,' so no one knew where you had gone, and we were seeking all over the hills, and down at the beach in the caves. We were afraid you were drowned, or fallen down some hole. I never thought of the fair; in fact didn't know there was one."
  - "Oh! Cecil, I am sorry. I never thought of that."
- "For the future, Dollie, if you want anything you must come and ask yourself."
- "I will. I would have done this time, Cis, only when Alfred offered it seemed rude not to let him."
- "And you must play with him as little as possible. He is not at all a good boy. Can't you play with Jock? He is a nice companion."
- "Yes. I like him better than Alfred, but what can one say when Alfred asks? It is very awkward, Cecil."
- "I know it is," said Cecil laughing. "I don't want you to be rude, but don't play with him more than can be helped, and don't believe all he says. I am afraid he tells shocking stories."
- "Wouldn't you have given me such a hard punishment if you had known 'bout Alfred?"
- "No, I don't think I should. I was angry with you for going."
- "What a pity I learnt that second verse; and there is no poss'ble way of unlearning it, is there, Cis? Hadn't I better count it on to the next time I'm naughty, if it ever happens again? I might be naughty once, you know, and not be punished."

"Well, we can hardly do that I think, Dollie. Suppose we count it back to some time when you have been bad, and have not been punished enough."

Sometimes dear Cecil is not quite reasonable; but she is as good as she can be for a grown up.

#### CHAPTER XIV

## JOCK TELLS ME A SECRET.

"You might tell me a tale, Cis," I said. "It is rather lonely while Jock is away. Couldn't you make up a short one till he comes back?"

Cecil thought for a while, and then began a most intresting one 'bout a little girl, and how naughty little boys and girls tried to 'suade her to dis'bey her kind grown up sister, and she wouldn't, and had many hard trials; but she lived till she was grown up herself, and when she knew what troubles a grown up has to bear she was glad she hadn't caused her kind sister any more bother by dis'beying her. When the tale was finished I sat and thought, and made up plans how I wouldn't cause my grown up sister any trouble, till Jock came back, and I ran to meet him.

"Is it all right? Is he friends?"

Jock was all flushed with delight. He was a funny boy. When he was pleased and happy he got red, and when he was angry he got white. He told me this was a great nuisance 'cause the boys at school thought he was 'fraid when he grew pale, and they bullied him, and

he had to fight a lot. He said it would have been still more bothering only Alan did the same, and he would rather have something that was a worry and be like him, than be all right, and be different,"

- "Yes, it's all right!" he said happily. "All right! And what do you think he did, Dollie?"
  - "Don't know. Do tell me. What?"
  - " He 'pologized."
  - "'Pologized!" I said, over again. I was stricken.
- "Regularly asked pardon, as though I were a big grown up man."
- "Oh! Jock, how awfully good of him! What did you say? What did you feel like?"
- "I don't quite know. Do you know what it is to be all glad, and all sorry at the same time."

I nodded. "When dear mother goes away for a visit, and promises to bring me a present if I'm a good girl. I want the present badly, and I'm glad 'cause of that, but I can't help crying to say goodbye."

"That's the kind of feel. I'll tell you how it was. We had to run all the way to the station, but when we got there the train was late, so Alan sat down, and held out his hand, and said, 'Old fellow, I'm sorry, down right sorry! I beg your pardon!' I got hold of his hand and hugged it, I was so glad. He was sorry about the whipping, but I told him I didn't care for that. He could whip me again if he wanted to, if only he would be friends afterwards. So we had a talk til the train came in, and then he leaned out of the window, and said, 'Now, be off out of the station while I can see you. Goodbye for the present, little chum!' I love Alan to call me that. To be chums with a big grown up man! It's grand, Dollie!"

Jock rubbed his face with his hankershift.

"I'm ever so glad, Jock, ever so glad. But Jock, what awful stories Alfred has told."

Jock nodded. "I'm going to tell him what I think of him afterwards."

"Are you, Jock? Don't when I'm there. I don't like it. Shall you think of him very hard?"

Jock sighed. "I'm afraid he's the kind of boy who won't fight. He looks like it. If so I shall just give him a thump or two, and say no more about it. I say, Dollie, I'm going to thank Miss Cecil. Come with me. I've got something for you; Alan sent it."

Jock had brought back two boxes. I knew the kind. They are diffrent from any others. Cecil was leaning back in her chair, staring up into the trees, and gabbling to herself, but she stopped when we went to her.

"Miss Cecil," said Jock, getting hold of one of her hands, and squeeging it. "I want to tell you how awfully 'bliged I am. I never was so 'bliged to any one before. If there is ever anything I can do for you if you'll only tell me I'll do it whatever it is."

Cecil smiled at him. "Thank you, very much, Jock. I don't know of anything at present."

"But you'll 'member, won't you, Miss Cecil? I'm not just saying it, you know, to be p'lite. I mean it every word. I'm so 'bliged that I should like you to want me to do something I didn't like to show you how 'bliged I am."

Cecil thanked him again, and said she would think 'bout it, and if ever the time came she would 'mind him of his promise.

Jock picked up the two boxes he had put on the grass, and stood looking first at Cecil, and then at them. He wanted to asplain something and didn't know how to

begin. One often feels like that, and then if the grown up is kind she asks questions, and that gives one a start, and if she isn't it never gets asplained. Cecil was kind.

"What have you there, Jock? It looks to me very like chocolate."

Jock brightened up. "That's 'zactly what it is, Miss Cecil. There is one for Dollie, and one for me, and none for you. You see, it's this way. When Alan had chummed again he said, 'Get a box of chocolates, old chap, and give one to Dollie as well, with my love.' I told him how very kind you had been, and if it hadn't been for you p'raps I might never have had another happy moment, 'cause I couldn't possibly be happy, you know, if he was angry. I said wouldn't he send one to you with his love, and he wouldn't. He laughed, and said, 'I'm afraid she wouldn't accept it, laddie, just yet. Perhaps she will some day, if I am lucky.' But he didn't give me any more money. What I want to say is, won't you have mine? I'd like you to. I'm much more 'bliged to you than a box of chocolates is worth, and I'm not counting this against doing things for you when you ask me."

Cecil had grown very rosy, but she wasn't cross. She only said, "Thank you, Jock. I understand. No, I'll not take the box; perhaps you'll give me one or two. I I should like some."

"But do take them all," begged Jock. "You see, Alan is worth so much more than chocolates. Anyone would rather have him than the biggest box that ever was made. Wouldn't you?"

Cecil looked doubtful. "I don't know, Jock. They do make such very large boxes at some places, and I'm so fond of them."

"Well, p'raps you wouldn't 'cause he's not your big brother. But if you like them do have all, please do.

Cecil gave him a kiss. "You are a dear old fellow. No, I will not take the box, but you shall give me some, and I'm very glad I was able to explain things for you. I'll not forget what you have promised."

Jock was very pleased though he would rather she had all, but she asplained that if she took all his she really couldn't manage any of mine and I always gave her a share. I was glad she said that. I was 'fraid she wouldn't take some of mine, and if Cecil won't, things don't taste nearly so good. She had three of Jock's, and three of mine, and said it would be enough for the present.

"Now, children, you really must go and play, and not interrupt me any more. I'll shall never learn this if I don't have a bit of time to myself."

"What are you learning, Cis? I asked much int' rested. "I didn't know grown ups ever learnt lessons. Is it a punishment?"

"It isn't intended to be, Dollie, but I fancy it will be before I have finished. It's a play, and I am to take rather a long part."

"What is a play?" I asked.

Jock clapped his hands. "It's an act. Are you going to do an act, Miss Cecil? How I wish I were grown up, and could act too. When is it to be?"

"An act? Like you did at Christmas when I had a party? How lovely! Are you going to do it here? And, oh Cecil! are you going to have your hair down again?"

"They want me to in the first part, so as to look very young, but I don't know whether to or not. What do you advise, Dollie?"

It's splendid when Cecil asks things like that. One feels so grand when a grown up asks one what they should do.

"I 'vise you to do it, Cis," I said. "Oh, do! You'll look sweet! You should just see it, Jock. It's all goldy, and crinkly, and curly, and wavy. Sweet! And such a length when you pull it out straight!"

"I know!" said Jock, eagerly. "Lovely! Do Miss Cecil, do! When Alan saw it he said, 'Jove!"

"ALAN!" shouted Cecil. She really and truly shouted though she often tells me it isn't ladylike when one is talking quietly. And she didn't even say' Mr McKenzie,' like she always did, not even Mr. Alan like I do. She reg'larly shouted 'ALAN!' just like that. Then she seemed to 'member how unladylike it was to speak so loud, for she got redder than I had ever seen her 'fore, and she spoke quite quietly. But she might almost as well have shouted again she was so very clear and astinct and slow.

"What—in—the—name—of—all—that's—amazing—does—Mr—McKenzie—know—about—my—hair?"

"It was me, Cecil," I asplained. "I was telling Jock how long and lovely it was, and he said I must be mistaken 'cause he had seen his cousin's hair down, and it was only on to her shoulders, so I got the longest hair I could find, and showed it to him."

"Yes," said Jock. "And it wouldn't lie straight while I was measuring it with Alan's foot rule, so I got him to hold it for me, and when we came to the end he said, 'Jove!' and told me how many feet it was. I forget now, but it was a lot."

Cecil looked at the sky, and seemed as though she were speaking to some one up in the tree. "And this is the kind of thing to which an unfortunate girl has to submit when she possesses an admiring and enterprising young sister!"

It was quite uncomferable. She didn't seem as though she were speaking either to Jock or me, and there wasn't anybody else, for I looked up the tree, and there was no one, not even a bird."

"Was it naughty, Cis?" I asked. "You never told me not to."

"No," said Cecil, in a kind of calm manner. "No, Dollie, it is entirely my own fault. I never did forbid you to annex samples of my personality, and exhibit them to comparative strangers."

It was uncomferabler than before. When Cecil begins to use those long words, and talk in that queer tone I know something is very wrong. I used to think it was French when I was little, but it isn't, though it might as well be for all I can understand. If it were not for the tone I couldn't have known a bit; but tones tell a lot at times.

"I'm very sorry if it was naughty, Cis. I won't do it again."

"I don't suppose you will. Once of that kind of thing is sufficient. I never saw such a child."

I don't know what Cecil meant. 'Course she hadn't. She told me once that of all the grillions and grillions of leaves in the trees there wasn't two azactly alike, and I knew there weren't. I had compared lots to see, and there was always some diff'rence. And if two little leaves couldn't manage to be the same how could another girl as big as me do it? And she would have to be alike in every tiny, tiny thing in order to be a such. And s'pose there was one, and she 'suaded mother and Cecil that she was me. Why, I might be turned out into the streets and starve while they thought they were petting and loving

their own little Dollie, and it would be only a wicked such. It was a very mis'rubble thought, and made me unhappy. I wished I hadn't 'magined it, and tried to think of something else. Some thoughts cannot be thought of long if one wishes to be happy.

"I should just like to know what Mr. McKenzie can think of me," said Cecil severely.

"He thinks you're lovely," Jock said eagerly. "He thinks—"

"Hush! Jock. You musn't say things like that."

Why mustn't he, I wondered? She had just wanted to know what Mr. Alan thought, and as soon as Jock was telling she stopped him. One never can tell what grown ups mean. Jock grew nearly as red as Cecil.

"I didn't mean to say what I oughtn't, Miss Cecil. Are you vexed?"

"No," said Cecil, laughing suddenly. "I'm not vexed. But, Dollie, I must beg of you not to do things like that again. You mustn't take a thing—not a thing—out of my room to show it to anybody, without my leave, unless it happens to be your own."

"I won't, Cecil. I never will again. I wouldn't have taken that hair, only I thought you had quite finished with it."

Cecil burst out laughing. "It's not the hair, goosey. It's—there, never mind. You'll not understand. Don't look so woebegone. I'm not angry; you wouldn't know. Give me a kiss, pet, and trot along or I shall be breaking down in my part to-morrow, and then what will happen?"

"Are you not angry with me either, Miss Cecil?"

"Not a bit. Trot, both of you."

Cecil leaned back, and began staring at the sky and gabbling again. I made up my mind to beg to stay up

to-morrow night and hear her. She had never let me stay once since the night of the first party, but I was quite well by that time, and thought if she said 'no' I would 'mind her that she had extra punished me, and p'raps she would think over matters. Jock said he would too, and we 'cided to sit together, and clap every time Cecil came on the scene. I hoped she would leave her lovely hair hanging down, and Jock said he would ask Mr. Alan to 'suade her.

"Where are we going, Jock? I don't want to go far. There isn't any trot left in me."

"That's what comes of going to a fair, and walking a lot yesterday."

"Once when Mary was poorly in bed," I said, "Mother had to ask a lady to come and scrub our passage, and clean the boots, and do the front doorstep. She was a nice lady, and talked to me. She groaned whenever she stood up and knelt down, 'cause of the pains in her legs. She said she was a 'maticky subject.' I guess I'm a 'maticky subject to-day. My legs ache all the time. Let's sit down here."

Jock was quite willing. He said his legs were a bit stiff, and a run to the station and back again rather took it out of a fellow. Then he stuck his hands in his pockets and stared very hard at me. It wasn't like Jock to be rude. He was usually a perlite boy, and I got red, and tried to stare back, but it isn't easy when a person is looking at one all the time. One wants to see what the sky is doing, or if one's shoe has come unfastened, or to pick up a stone, or silly things like that. And Jock's eyes didn't seem as though they were looking at the outside of me either; they were looking right to the back of my head on the inside, and he was thinking of something far away. I moved a little so that if he only

wanted to stare in that d'rection he could do it athout me being in the way. And he did. So I knew he was lost in thought, and hadn't 'tended to be nasty. Grown ups often get lost in thought, and then they are cross if one speaks, so I always wait till they find themselves again. It is safer.

At last Jock said so suddenly that it made me jump, "Dollie, can you keep a secret?"

- "I can," I said proudly. "Mother once told me a secret 'bout Cecil's birthday, and I never told anyone, and never even went to look at it though she showed me the drawer where it was kept. Have you got one, Jock?"
  - " I b'lieve I have."
  - "Who told you?"
  - 'No one. I found it out for myself."

If Fanny Danvers or the doctor's Bessie had said that, I should have known it wasn't much of one, such as 'to-morrow's Wednesday,' or 'the sun's in the sky,' or such foolish things. But Jock was diffrent. He never said silly things, and his plans were always jolly. So I said, "Did you really? How clever! Tell me."

People will often tell one things if one says, 'How clever!' that they wouldn't if one didn't.

- "Will you promise never to tell a single solitary soul?"
  - "I will," I said, solemnly.
- "Then I b'lieve my Alan wants to be your Cecil's prince."
- "Then he can't be. We made up our minds not to have any princes in our play; and, anyhow, the game's over, Jock, and we are beaten."
- "Yes, we are beaten," 'greed Jock sadly. "I didn't care much when Alan was angry, but now I wish we had

won. But I don't mean a game, Dollie. I mean really."

"I don't know what you mean. He isn't a prince really, is he?"

"I know about it, though. Last year when I was paying a visit at uncle's, Cousin Ned was somebody's prince. I thought he was from the way he behaved, and I asked him, and he said he was, and Alan does the same kind of things now that Cousin Ned did. And I'll tell you what, Dollie; the reason he was so cross with me for going to the fair was partly 'cause of Miss Cecil. He said he wouldn't have thought so much about it if I had gone by myself, but to take you had frightened her dreadfully. She thought we were drowned, or something."

"There wasn't any water at the fair, though, Jock."

"But they didn't know we were there. Have you ever noticed how interested people are in newspapers-not books, I can understand that—but stupid papers? If Alan is reading one and I want to ask him something it is an awful bother. I say, 'Alan,' and he says, 'What?' and I know he isn't attending. So I say 'Alan,' again, and he says 'Go on.' If I do go on, at the end he says, 'Didn't quite catch,' or 'Wait a bit,' or something. don't want to wait a bit any longer I say, 'Alan, Miss Cecil says-'. That's quite enough. He throws down his paper and says, 'Hullo! what's that? Come and sit on my knee, old chap. What about Miss Cecil?' talk about her for a bit, and he listens, and then quickly, before he can get at the paper again, I ask what I want. Grown ups are awfully queer. You have to learn a lot before you know how to get to work."

"They are, Jock. I get heaps of things by saying I won't have them."

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"That's funny. How do you do it?"

"When Cecil is going anywhere and I want to go, I climb on her lap and say, 'Dearest Cecil, can't I go with you if I'm a very good girl? I won't go if you'd rather not, but I should like to so very, very much.' Then Cis often says, "Well, I daresay you can, if you'll promise not to worry;" or if she can't take me she says, 'never mind, pet, I'll try and think of something to soften the dis'pointment.' Very often the softenings are better than the real thing. I often ask for something that I don't much care for in order to get a nice softening."

"That's a good plan. But I say, Dollie, don't you understand about Alan's wanting to be Cecil's prince?"

"You don't mean he wants to marry her!" I burst out, horrorfied. "Oh! he can't! I know what marrying means. The doctor's Bessie had a grown up sister and she got married last Christmas, and went away to another town, and she has never been home once since. Bessie says she will never come again 'cept for a visit as though she were an uncle or an aunt, or a personal friend of the family. Cecil mustn't go away like that."

"Why, Dollie, I thought you'd like it. It would be fine. She would come and live with us, and you could come too, and I'd show you all my rabbits, and white mice, and guinea-pigs, and Trip and Rex. And there's a pond near us, and a river. Alan takes me out boating sometimes, and you could come; and if they married before the winter I would teach you how to skate on the pond."

"I dont want it. And I couldn't come and stay with you. I must live with mother."

"But you could pay a visit. Oh! Dollie, it would be grand. And we could be chums always 'stead of having

to stop when we left Sunnyside. Shouldn't you like to be chums always with me? I would with you. I like you better than any little girl I ever knew."

- "I wouldn't mind being chums always, Jock. But I can't spare Cecil. I wouldn't care if Mr. Alan came and lived with us 'stead of Cecil living with you."
  - "But he couldn't leave me."
- "Why couldn't he, as much as Cecil leaving me?"
- "You have a father and mother, and Mr. Dick besides; and I've nobody but Alan."
- "You could have Dick if you liked," I offered. "I shouldn't much mind him."
  - " Alan doesn't want him."
  - "Then let him come and live with us."
- "You aren't a bit nice about it, Dollie. I thought you would have been glad. And Alan couldn't leave business, anyhow. Miss Cecil's not in business, is she?"
  - "No, she's not," I said sadly.

Why hadn't dear Cecil gone into business?

- "And there's another thing," went on Jock. "How would you like Mr. Dalton to have her."
  - "He shan't!" I said, firmly.
  - "You couldn't hinder him."
- "Yes, I could. The doctor's Bessie told me 'bout that. There is a place in the marriage service when the minister asks if anyone minds them getting married, and if anyone does he won't do it. I should mind."
  - "I don't b'lieve he'd stop for a little girl."
- "Yes, he would. What would be the use of saying anyone, if he meant someone couldn't mind. 'Sides, Bessie told me that she told her sister if she wasn't nice to her she'd mind; and her sister was so frightened she

gave her a whole sixpence to promise not to say a word."

"Well, you're not kind, Dollie. I'm your chum, and you ought to be glad if I am."

"Why oughtn't you to be sorry if I am?"

"'Cause I was glad first. It isn't fair."

It was mean, but how could I help it?

"When Bessie's grown up sister was married Bessie walked after her," I said, "with a blue dress, and some flowers which she held in her hand, and they hung nearly to the ground. Lovely! And she had a pretty brooch. She said the bridegroom had given it to her. She said that was the name of the gentleman who was marrying her sister; but I never heard her call him that—she always said 'Tom.'"

"But, Dollie, won't you think over matters and see how nice it would be?"

"I don't want to," I said, getting out my pocket hankershiff with a D marked in the corner and roses round it, and feeling ready to cry. "I don't want to, Jock. If Cecil went to live with you she might get to love you better, and I shouldn't like it. I've always been her pet and little one, and I can't give her up. She mustn't love you best. Oh, dear! Oh, dear! I wish we hadn't come to this place. I wish we hadn't interduced them. Can't we interduce them back again so that they daren't speak to each other? Cecil's mine, not yours. She mustn't love you more than me."

"But she wouldn't, Dollie," said Jock ever so earnestly. "I'm sure she wouldn't. Even if she wanted to, which she won't, I wouldn't let her. It wouldn't be fair. I know she is yours. I shouldn't like Alan to like you best, so I'll be strictly fair—on my

honour. You wouldn't mind her loving me a lot if she loved you more, would you? 'Cause she is so very nice I must love her, you know."

"I shouldn't mind that," I sobbed. "'Cause if she loved me more I should like her to love you heaps, 'cause the more she did the more there'd be for me."

"And she always shall, Dollie."

"Do you promise? It's a faithful, faithful promise?"

"On my word and honour. I should never think of such a thing. And you know, Dollie, you might as well agree to Alan being her prince, she might get many a worse one—and she is bound to have one some day. All grown up ladies marry."

"No, they don't! Miss Malinson hasn't. I know she hasn't 'cause she's called Miss 'stead of Mrs. The doctor's Bessie says when people get married they love each other so much that they don't like to have anything diffrent from each other, so the gentleman even goes shares with his name. It doesn't matter what the lady has been called 'fore, she takes half his name afterwards, and they only have one atween them. I wonder why the gentleman always gives it, and not the lady. I must ask Bessie."

"Why, it would never do. Ladies don't give presents. Alan and Mr. Dalton and lots of gentlemen give flowers and sweets and things to Miss Cecil, but you never see her give things to them, do you?"

"I never have. But p'raps she does when I'm not looking. But, anyhow, you see all ladies don't get married."

<sup>&</sup>quot; All nice ones do."

<sup>&</sup>quot; I'll ask Cecil."

"Why, Dollie, you promised you wouldn't tell a single solitary soul."

"I didn't know Cecil was a single solitary soul. But I don't mean I'll tell her 'bout the prince. Mother often says, 'you shouldn't have put such an idea into the child's head. She would never have thought of it of her own accord.' P'raps if I don't put the idea in Cecil's head she will never think of it of her own accord."

Jock sighed. "I thought it would have been so nice, and now you've spoilt it all. You'll be sorry if Mr. Dalton gets to be her prince."

"Yes, I shall. I'd rather have Alan than Mr. Dalton."

"Well, think it over, Dollie. P'raps you might give consent after a bit."

I made up my mind to keep a careful watch on Mr. Dalton, and Jock would help me, and if we saw any danger we were both to back up Mr. Alan on 'ditions that Jock would never let Cecil love him best, that he should beg Mr. Alan to invite me often to their house, that he should teach me to skate on their pond, and I should have the choice of two of his rabbits, or guineapigs, or whatever else I liked best, only it wasn't to be Trip, and Rex belonged to Alan.

I didn't get a chance of speaking to Cecil till after tea, and then I was so tired that when she asked would I like to go to bed I was quite ready, though it was only half-past six.

"Cecil," I asked "do all grown-up ladies get married?"

"No, certainly not."

"Do all nice ones?"

"I believe not. I have heard people say that often the nicest ones don't."

I felt quite happy. Dearest Cecil was the very nicest that ever was, so she was almost safe.

- "You are rather young to be talking about marrying, Dollie."
  - "Oh, I'm not planning for myself," I asplained.

Cecil laughed. "You funny little thing," she said, giving me a kiss. "Now hop into bed."

- "Wait a minute, Cecil. I want to ask you a great favour," I said climbing into her lap. "May I sit up and see you act to-morrow night? You see you are my sister, not all those people's, so it wouldn't be fair for them to see you, and me not. And I would be very good."
- "You wouldn't care about it, Dollie. It's a grown-up act, not a children's."
  - "But I'd like to see you, Cis."
- "There would be no one for you to sit with, and you wouldn't like being alone."
  - "There's Dick."
  - "Dick is acting too. He's the minor villain."
  - "Oh! Well, then, Jock. We could be together.'
- "I dare say you could, but it would be late, and not interesting. Don't you think you'd be happier in bed?"
- "No, I don't! Do let me stay, Cis. You know," I said hugging her hand "you know I learnt two verses, and had dry bread for breakfast."
- "So you think you ought to have an extra treat? Well, there's something in that. I'll see about it, pet."

When Cecil 'see's about it, pet,' I know it's all right 'less something real happens such as being naughty, or poorly, or Dick saying he will not have it. So I kissed her a lot of times, and she tucked me up in bed.



"Don't make too sure, Dollikins."

So I promised not to make it, but I felt it all the same!

#### CHAPTER XV

#### A WET DAY

'Fore I got up next morning I heard a sound. It was a nasty sound. It went pit-pat-pit-pat on the window. It was rain. I jumped out of bed and ran to look. The sky was all grey where it wasn't black and dirty brown.

- "Oh, Cis! it's pouring!"
- "Yes. We're in for a wet day, Dollie. Never mind, we must make the best of it."
- "I don't like making the best of it. I wish it never rained."
- "Then what would you do for anything to drink? And how would the strawberries, and apples, and pears get watered?"
- "They could do it with watering cans, or the hose out of the rivers."
- "But what would become of rivers if there was no rain? They would dwindle away."
  - "Out of the sea, then."
- "I'm afraid people couldn't manage it, and I don't think salt water would be good for fruit; even if it were

you wouldn't like it to drink. Remember how you spluttered when you got a mouthful during bathing. And what would become of the sea too, if no rain came?"

"Are we 'bliged to have it, Cis? It seems a great pity. And Jock and I wanted to build a sand castle to-day. It is very illconvenient that it should just choose now."

"Oh, I don't know, Dollie. It couldn't choose a day when you and Jock didn't wish to do something, could it? But you will want some breakfast even if it is wet, so hurry."

"P'raps it will stop when the tide turns. Why does a tide stop rain, Cis?"

"Don't know, dear."

I looked out of the window several times while getting dressed, but it rained and rained.

When we went downstairs we found Mr. Alan standing at the bottom looking out. He said, "Good morning, Miss Sinclair. Not a very hopeful prospect."

Jock pulled my arm. "I say, Dollie, have you thought—have you 'cided? Doesn't he look a nice prince?"

"Pretty fair. P'raps he would if he had long hair, and a long kind of pinasore, and tight stockings all the way up."

"He'd be horrid!" said Jock, crossly. "Princes don't dress like that now. I once saw a real one, and he was like everybody else. Alan is far nicer."

"He isn't as pretty as Cecil, Jock."

"Well, it's a different kind of prettiness."

When breakfast was over it was raining still, and didn't seem a bit more like stopping. I kept going to the door to see till Cecil said, "You are a doleful, dumpy Dollie. Can't you have a game with Jock?"

"I can't find him," I said sadly. "There is nothing to do, Cis, when it rains."

"Well, it's no use getting cross, Dollie."

I didn't want to get cross. There was the act that night, and no one knows what would happen if I were naughty.

"Will you come and sing to me, Cecil?" I asked.
"I haven't heard the one bout 'Master Fox, he came a-creeping,' ever since we came here."

"Peep into the room, then, and see if there's anyone there."

It was quite empty, so Cecil took my hand. On the way we met Jock.

"It's raining still, Jock," I said. "Isn't it a pity?"

"Oh, it must rain sometimes, and we can have jolly fun in the house. What are you going to do?"

Jock looked as happy as though the sun was shining, and we were on the beach. He didn't mind weather much. If it were fine he made up games out of doors, and if it were wet he made them up inside. He was a splendid chum. I was glad he was mine.

"Cecil is going to sing, 'Master Fox.' Come and hear it?"

"May I, Miss Cecil? Do let me. Here's the stool. I can open the piano."

Cecil sat down and smiled at both of us, and began the song. It is very pretty, but very, very sad.

"Now, 'I'm going to Philadelphia,'" said Jock. "Do you know that one, Miss Cecil?"

Cecil nodded. "Now, 'Cock Robin,'" I said, the minute that one was over.

She kept on first what I asked, and then what Jock did for a long time. At last the door opened and Miss Lacy came in with a pile of music. Mr. Franklin came

after her, and took the music away to carry it. I think they were chums. They were nearly always together. When they saw us they stopped, but Cecil called out, "Come along, Miss Lacy. I have only been amusing the children. We have finished now."

So Miss Lacy came, and took my face atween her hands, and said, "But what will little Dollie think? Will you mind if I have the piano now, Dollie?"

She was a nice lady. I liked her.

"Oh, no. Jock says in Sunnyside one has to go shares with things. It wouldn't do for one person to keep a thing all the time he says, and we have had a lot of songs."

"That is very sensible of Jock, and very kind of you both," she said giving me a kiss. "Do you think sister Cecil will be kind enough to play some of my songs for me? I can't play much."

"Cecil can," I said, proudly. "She plays beaut'fully. She passed an exam. with an honour. She plays lovely pieces. They are very long, and have no tune, but they are clever. I don't like them, but she says I shall when I'm a grown up. I have a lot to learn 'fore then."

Miss Lacy laughed, and began to sing. She had a big voice, much louder than Cecil's, and much louder than Cecil could play 'less she used the loud pedal. That is a great help. I didn't like her songs so well as Cecil's. She sang about leaves, and birds, and streamlets, and things. But the leaves only rustled, and the birds did nothing in partic'lar, and the streamlets gurgled, and her heart was aweary, aweary, aweary. Jock whispered that we would go and play, so we ran off to the billiard room. Mr. Alan was lying on one of the seats which went round the room, but he smiled when we came, and looked past us at the door. Nearly all the gentlemen did that when

they saw me, and at first I didn't know what they wanted, but I was used to it by then, so said at once:

"Cecil's playing the piano."

"Is she?" said Mr. Alan. "By herself?"

"No. Cecil's playing, and Miss Lacy singing, and Mr. Franklin turning over the leaves."

"That's a nice party. Do you think there is anything I could do if I joined them?"

"You might have held her bracelets if it had been evening," I said, ser'usly. "Sometimes when I am very good she lets me hold them, and put them on if I will be very careful not to hurt the snap. But I don't b'lieve you could get them over your hands; they are much bigger than Cecil's." I put my hands round his big wrist, and tried to think what the size would be. "I don't really think you could. It's nice to be trusted, and hold the bracelets."

"I'm sure it is," said Mr. Alan, smoothing my hair.
"I should like it very much."

He wasn't making fun. He was speaking quite in earnest.

"I'm going to sit up to-night, and see dear Cecil act," I whispered "I'm going to sit with Jock, if he can stay too. This is if I'm good, and I'm trying to be. It is much dif'culter to be good when it's raining than when it's fine."

"I believe it is," said Mr. Alan. "Never mind. Do your best. You must play with Jock. He is a grand one for games."

Jock got red. He was pleased. "Can I stay and see Miss Cecil, too?"

"All right, if you're good. Well, I'll go and hear the singing."

"Oh, don't, Mr. Alan. Hear the playing, 'stead.

The playing is quite as much worth hearing as the singing, and Cecil says it's a thankless business playing for songs. That means everyone thanks the one who sings, and no one the one who plays. Do listen to the playing and thank for that. The playing is so very beaut'ful."

"I will," said Mr. Alan. "It's good advice, Dollie. But I like playing, anyhow. Goodbye, for the present."

He nodded and walked away, but as soon as the door was shut it opened again.

"By the way, Jock, no touching the billiard table, you know."

"Can't I?" said Jock, dis'pointed. "Oh, Alan, I was going to have a game if no one else wanted. Alfred plays: I've seen him."

"I'm not Alfred's brother," said Mr. Alan. "It won't do, old fellow. Suppose you cut the cloth. Besides, billiards are not intended for little boys."

"If I'm very, very careful, can't I?"

"No. Sorry to say it, laddie, but no."

Jock sighed, and stood twisting his hands 'bout. Mr. Alan waited.

At last he said, "Well, old chap?"

"I think I'd better promise, Alan," said Jock, giving another deep sigh.

"All right. I'm sorry it's as bad as that."

When he had gone again, I asked, "Why do you promise, Jock?"

"'Cause I want to play badly. Sometimes when Alan tells me not to do things, and I want very much I do, 'less I 'member to promise, and then 'course I can't. It seems such a pity, and no one is using the table."

The door banged, and Alfred ran in. "Have a game of billiards, Jock."

"Can't! Let's play at something else."

"Look here what I've got."

He opened his hand and showed a small white thing.

"It's a cigarette. Have you ever smoked, Jock? I have! I often pick up father's ends when he throws them away."

"No, I've not, and I'm not going to till I'm a man. Alan says it makes you small. I should hate to be a small man."

" Why?"

"'Cause Alan's big. I'm going to be like him."

"If he were little would you want to be like him then?"

"'Course; but he isn't."

"Would you like a puff, Dollie?" asked Alfred.

"No, thank you. I don't like it. Dick gave me one once. He said it was 'licious, but it wasn't. It went down the wrong lane, and made me cough for ever so long. Horrid!"

"It will make you sick, Alfred," said Jock. "Throw it away, and let's have a game."

"It won't. I can smoke, I can," boasted Alfred. "You are two babies.

"Let's go, Dollie," said Jock. "Bring down your 'Pendium we haven't tried half the games, and a wet morning will give us a good chance. It's no good stopping here and seeing Alfred sick."

So we played with the 'Pendium all the morning. There were a lot of games, and we tried all we could find out how to do. And the morning went quite quickly even though we couldn't get out. I hoped it would be fine after dinner, but it wasn't. The sky was as grey, and the rain seemed as though it couldn't stop if it

wanted. The only chance on days like this is to take no notice, and even then it often goes on till one is in bed and fast asleep.

When dinner was over Cecil went to her room and began learning her act again. She told me I could go and play, but said I had better keep away from Alfred. A rainy day is the very one for getting into trouble, and she didn't want to have to send me to bed 'stead of letting me sit up at night.

"I know, Cecil," I said, gravely. "But I'm going to be very good. And I can't play with Alfred. He is sick in bed. Jock warned him."

" What about?"

"Smoking a cigarette; but he would do it."

" Disgusting child!" said Cecil.

"Jock says Mr. Alan says he is an unlicked cub. What's an unlicked cub, Cecil?"

"It's a naughty boy whose parents don't punish him, and try to make him better."

"It's nice not to be punished, though."

"It's nice at the time, but nasty afterwards. Would you rather be punished sometimes and grow up a good girl whom everybody loved, or be left alone, and grow bad, and no one care for you?"

"Were you punished, Cecil?"

"Of course I was."

"Is that the reason why Mr. Alan, and Mr. Dalton, and all the other gentlemen love you?"

"Go and play, Dollie."

Cecil sounded cross, but she was laughing. So I went out. Jock was waiting for me. "Are you coming? Shall we play?"

"Yes. What at, Jock? I'm tired of the 'Pendium. Couldn't you make up a new game?"

- "I've got one. I'll 'splain. But we want some string."
- "Wouldn't hide and seek be jolly with all these rooms and passages, Jock?"
- "But we can't go into people's rooms without being invited. It would be rude. Come and get the string. This is our room. Come in."
  - "Will Mr. Alan let me?"
- "Oh, yes. It's mine as well, you know, so I can ask you. Alan, Dollie can come in, can't she?"

Mr. Alan was reading, but he nodded, and said:

- "Coming to pay a visit, Dollie?"
- " Jock asked me," I said shyly.

Jock was opening all the drawers and boxes, and turning over the things.

- "I say, Jock, you needn't make hay of everything. What do you want?"
  - " My string, Alan."
- "String? There's a piece in the fender. What are you going to do with it?"
- "That's no use. I want a lot. I want my balls. We are going to play a game."
- "Not a noisy one, I hope. You'll remember people are resting after dinner, and keep quiet."
- "All right, Alan. 'Tisn't a bit noisy. It's perfectly quiet. It would spoil the fun to make a noise. Oh, here it is, and a piece of stick to wind it on. Come along, Dollie."

He ran out to the top of the stairs, and I followed eagerly.
"Is it horses?"

"Horses? No! I don't care much for horses. I'll tell you. I'm a man, and I'm going to travel to the Wild West. There I shall hunt, and shoot, and build a house ready for you. You are my wife and four children.

This string is the clue. I have to start first, and whereever I go I shall unwind the clue. You must give me a fair start, and then follow faithfully wherever it leads. This stick is for you to wind it up again as you come along. When you come to the end I shall be there, and we will have a joyful meeting."

"Where are you going?" I asked

"I don't know, and it would be no fun to tell if I did. The thing is to follow the clue, and see where it leads."

"All right," I 'greed.

"You must stay at home for five years,—that means five minutes, you know, Dollie—and then follow."

"How shall I tell five minutes?"

"We have a clock in our room. Can you tell the time?"

"Only when it's twelve o'clock. Then the hands are together at the top, but they go anywhere at other times.

"That's awkward! Never mind, I'll show you. Let's go back. There! do you see that hand at two? When it gets to three the five minutes will be up. Now, are you ready? Do you know what to do? Let's begin. Come and see me off at the door, Amazon."

So I followed him to the door, and we bade good-bye for five years.

"Mind you take good care of yourself, my dear," said Jock. "I shall not know a happy moment till we meet again. Children, you must be good, and obey your mother. If I hear a bad report you will get the strap."

The children all squeaked they would be very good and give no trouble.

"Good-bye. Mind you don't get your feet wet, for fear of your 'kitas. Take a cab if it goes on raining," I said,

like mother does when she is seeing father off to business.

"Your wish shall be law," said Jock.

It sounded even perliter than dear father does when he says, "All right, dear, don't worry!"

So Jock strapped a satchel on his shoulders, and went away, and the children and I waved my hankershiff till he was out of sight. Then I went back to the room and wept for a year. After that I stared at the clock. It was very queer, and I began to get worrieder and worrieder. At last it wasn't to be borne any longer.

"May I interruct, Alan, just for one minute," I asked, patting his knee to make him hear.

He put down his book and seemed as though he wanted to laugh, but he didn't; he only coughed, and said, "Certainly, little Dollie-girl. What's wrong?"

"It's the time," I asplained. "Jock has gone to the Wild West, and I'm his wife and four children, and have to follow in five years—I mean five minutes—and I don't know what the clock's doing. At first the little hand was ahead, but now the big one is. Jock said I was to wait till one of them was at three, and I can't 'member which it was."

- "The big one," said Mr. Alan, smiling.
- "Are you quite, quite sure? I wouldn't like to cheat. Jock says he won't play with people who don't do fair."
  - " I'm quite sure."
  - "Did you hear him?"
- "No; but it's all right, you'll find. Time's up, and you'd better be off or he will get too much start. Shut the door after you, little one, and don't slam."

I shut it ever so softly, and called through the keyhole, "Was that right?" and he said it was, and I was a good girl.

Then I got hold of the clue and followed it downstairs. When it turned the corner it began to go in and out of the banisters, so it took some time. At the bottom was a big marble table and it went over the top. I climbed up, and dropped down the other side, and followed across a passage and through a doorway into a room. Then it ran under a lot of seats. I crawled along winding all the way. It was rather dirty, but I had a dark dress so it didn't show so much as might have been aspected, but I was very hot when I got out at the other end and across the passage again. Then it went downstairs to where the kitchen was. It was so dark I had to feel there till I got used to it. It went into the kitchen, and ahind the chairs, and over the handle of the cupboard where Madeline and her mother lived. Madeline was at home and mewed and was glad to see me, but her mother was out. It was a sad thing, but Cook had been right about those kitties. They had all died 'cept Madeline, who loved me so much that she was struggling through. When I had petted her a bit I followed the clue again.

It went round the kitchen and on to the dressers. I had to get a chair to climb up, and the clue led along all the hooks on which Cook hung dishes. Cook wasn't in the kitchen. It was a pity. She might have said, "Arrah! then, Miss Dollie, asthore, an' is it a little cake ye'd loike to have?" and then I could have said "Yes."

The clue led out of there, and into a wood cellar. It didn't go over the wood, but was just turned round the handle. Then it went upstairs again on the opp'site side, and was slipped under the stair rod ends to keep it down 'cause there were no bannisters that side. It went into the passage, and there was a big pair of steps and it went up them, and I could see it hung over the gas at the top. I

didn't like heights but I couldn't leave the clue and never find Jock, so I held on very tightly and got nearly to the top. It was a long way down, and I got frightened. I don't know what I should have done, p'raps never seen Jock again, but Mr. Franklin came past. He stopped when he saw me nearly up the steps, and said:

"Little girl, that's dangerous. I don't think sister would like you to be up there."

"No; I'm sure she wouldn't," I said. "I don't like myself to be up here, but I can't get down. Oh! may I trouble you to lift me down, and get this string off the gas? I'm so sorry to bother you."

Cecil always says may she trouble people when she asks them to do things, so I knew it was right to say that.

Mr. Franklin laughed, climbed up, and slipped the string off, and carried me down in safety.

"What are you doing with that string, Dollie?"

"I'm winding it up. It's a game."

"All right! Don't go up steps again."

I promised not to, and followed the clue up some stairs I had never seen 'fore. I didn't know where I was. It is rather frightening to find oneself in a big house where one doesn't know where one is, and Cecil is quite lost, and one has only a clue to find Jock at the end. One is 'bliged to go on and come to some one.

Then it went under a door which was shut. That was uncomferable. I didn't know who would be in. P'raps it was the end. I knocked three times and then opened it. No one was there, and the clue went under the bed, and then out of the window! It truly did! Out of the window! It was wide open, and just outside was a narrow ledge, and the clue went along it and into the next room. Then I sat down and despaired. I didn't

dare to crawl along that narrow place. And Cecil wouldn't have liked me to go out in the rain. And it was very high from the ground. If I fell I should be smashed into little bits. I might have managed it if Jock had been there to help and say, 'Careful! I'm watching. You won't fall!' but by myself with four children to take care of I didn't dare. I asked the 'vice of the children, and they all squeaked, "I wouldn't risk it on any 'count, mother. It awfully dangerous."

I 'cided to follow the 'vice.

Then a drefful thought came. I didn't know where I was. I couldn't find Cecil. I couldn't find Jock. There was no one to be seen. If I couldn't follow that clue I might be left there till I was starved.

I said, "I won't cry yet! I won't cry yet. Cecil will look for me. I'm not frightened, much." Then I leaned out of the window and looked at the clue. I had a good thought. I ran out of the room and into the next which had its door wide open. It was all right! The clue came in there. I was saved! It was a good thing I hadn't -cried. So I went back and tied my hankershiff round the string stick and put it on the ledge, and then went to the second room again, and pulled carefully. It came along quite safely, and I grabbed it and began to wind up. Out it went and into a small dark room. There was a ladder. The clue went up. I felt about carefully, but it didn't come down again. I wondered if I ought to go up the ladder 'cause of what Mr. Franklin said, but steps and ladder aren't the same thing, so I climbed. The top was a door in the ceiling, and the ceiling was the floor of another room. It was a very dusty room, and was full of all kind of boxes, and old carpets, and ragged dresses and things. The clue climbed over boxes piled on the tops of each other, and round others. The corners were sharp, and I got rather a bad tear in my frock. It was fortunate it was so dirty 'fore that it didn't much matter. There was something large at the end of the room covered with carpets and cloths. The clue led to it; it led in it, and there was Jock!

I was in the Wild West.

#### CHAPTER XVI

#### THE ACT

He jumped up. "My dear, how glad I am to see you! And how well you're looking! Positively not a day older! Did you follow all the way, Dollie, did you?"

"Not quite all, "I said, beaming with delight at meeting him. "I couldn't manage the steps, and, Jock, I daren't crawl out of the window."

"I was sorry about the window," said Jock gravely.
"When I got here and had finished building the house I 'membered I oughtn't to have gone in such a dangerous place. I'm glad you didn't go there. Alan would be angry if he knew."

"What a nice place, Jock! How did you find it? Did you build this tent yourself?"

"Yes, isn't it fine? You must be hungry after your travels, Amazon; would you like a bit of bear's back, or a lion's tongue, or elephant's trunk?"

Jock pulled a cover off something on the ground, and there were four buns, and a box of sweets. I was so delighted I shouted, "Oh, Jock, how nice!" "Let me press you to a bit of elephant," said Jock, cutting a bun in half.

We eat the buns, and the sweets, and then had fine times. Jock showed me some fishing lines which he had put out to snare salmon. He let me fish, and when I pulled it in there was a sweet tied at the end. We hunted, and shot, and fought Indians, and saw with pleasure our family growing up around us, and becoming clever hunters too.

I got rather a lot more tears in my dress, but after the first it doesn't make much dif'rence, so I didn't let it spoil the afternoon. We dressed in the things we found to 'guise ourselves from the enemy, and had some desp'rate fights with the Indians. Sometimes we heard voices—real voices—they were people walking 'bout, but Jock said they were enemies, and we must lie low till the danger was past.

We were so 'cited we never thought of the time till we heard some one shouting, "Jock! Jock! Dollie! where are you?"

Then we looked at our hands, and our clothes, and each other's faces. "We're a bit dirty, aren't we?" said Jock.

We were!

We felt uneasy.

The voices came closer. One was Mr. Alan, and the other Cecil.

They stopped at the bottom of the ladder.

"They can't possibly be up there," said Cecil.

Mr. Alan laughed. "Then I think I'll see. If there is a place which is absolutely impossible Jock will be there, and where he is there will Dollie be. Will you come?"

"I suppose I'd better," said Cecil "Thank you! Gracious! what a place! DOLLIE!!!"

"Run to earth!" said Mr. Alan.

He didn't seem at all cross. Neither did Cecil. She held up her pretty dress so as not to touch a thing, and they both looked at us.

"Where on earth are you?" asked Cecil.

"In the Wild West," I asplained.

Jock got rather red, and I knew I oughtn't to have told.

But Cecil only said, "You dirty little thing!"

"Perfect sweeps, aren't they?" said Mr. Alan, laughing. "What marvellous places children do find to be sure."

"It's a jolly place, Alan," said Jock eagerly. "Any place is jolly when you have a chum, and are playing a game. Wouldn't you like to play here if Miss Cecil would play with you?"

"In that case I should be happy to play in the Desert of Sahara, or at the end of the world," said Mr. Alan, smiling at Cecil.

"Not for me, thank you, Mr. McKenzie," said Cecil.
"Lumber rooms don't appeal."

"Alan," said Jock, trying to get hold of his hand, but he stepped back.

"Don't touch me, old chap, till you have got rid of some of that filth. I'm clean, and ready for tea. Miss Sinclair, may I ask what you intend doing with your property?"

"Plunging it bodily into a bath, I think," said Cecil.
"It is the only thing to be done."

"Good idea! I'll follow it. Jock, walk downstairs, keep in the middle, don't touch a thing, and get into a bath. I'll bring some clean clothes."

Cecil looked at Jock, and then said, "If there's anything I can do to help, Mr. McKenzie? Perhaps you

are not accustomed—" She stopped athout finishing, and looked at the ground as though she had dropped something.

"Thank you, very much," said Mr. Alan. "But I'm quite used to it. I fancy I know considerably more about youngsters than most fellows. You see I have had charge of the little chap since he was two years old, and though, of course, he had a nurse, still he was always fond of me and used to howl till I did things for him. That's so, isn't it, laddie?"

He seemed to have forgotten he had told Jock not to touch him, for he put his hand under his chin, and smiled at him as though he liked him very much. I liked the way his eyes looked. They seemed to be saying, "I'm fond of you, too, old fellow!"

Jock got red all over. He stuck his hands in his pockets, and looked up straight at Mr. Alan, and nodded.

Cecil lifted her dress a little higher. "Well, if we are to turn out these little raggedmuffins respectably by tea it is time to be setting to work."

"It is. Mind your dress, Miss Sinclair. That box has nails. Let me go first and help. Dollie, wait till I come for you!"

When I saw the water in my bath after I was washed it was very black. Cecil said she was glad she hadn't made a mistake and thought Jock was me and I was Jock, and it was an alief to see it really was her little Dollie under all that dirt. She wasn't cross.

I ate a big tea. I was rather 'fraid Cecil would think me greedy, but she only said people who had been to the Wild West were sure to be hungry. I asked if I had been good enough to sit up and see her act, and she said "Yes," if she could find any body to take charge of me.

"Shall I ask Mrs. Garland, or Miss Malinson, Dollie," she asked, laughing.

"Oh! Cecil, dearest! not Miss Malinson. I'd rather take charge of myself. I would, indeed."

"Then we will try Mrs. Garland. There she is!"

Mrs. Garland guessed what we wanted at once. "You wish to ask something? Is it to take care of this little lady? To be sure."

"She is a good girl, and won't trouble you," said Cecil.

"She and Jock will sit together. It is only to keep an eye on her in case anything goes wrong. Thank you, very much."

"You may leave her now, if you like," said Mrs. Garland. "You will have plenty to do with dressing up. Are you nervous?"

"Very!" said Cecil, making a face. "It's the first time I have attempted anything of the kind save at Dollie's parties. I hope I shall not break down."

"Not a bit of it! She will do beautifully, won't she, Dollie?"

"Dearest Cis does everything beaut'fully," I said, so she gave me a kiss and went away.

I sat down by Mrs. Garland, and tried to be very good till Jock came.

"Come and see them setting the chairs, Dollie. I have found two stools, and we can sit in front and see everything."

We watched people walking 'bout, and the ladies coming down in pretty dresses, and some men getting the room ready and lighting the gasses. It seemed a long, long time 'fore Mrs. Garland came to say we had better take our seats. So we picked them up, and the people laughed, and said it was a good way of keeping them Mrs. Garland sat down and began knitting, and

Jock and I sat on the stools, and stared at the big curtain.

"Do you think Cecil is ahind?" I whispered.

"I b'lieve so. There's Alan! Come and sit near us, Alan. How long will it be before they begin?"

"Not knowing, can't say, Jock."

Mr. Alan sat down and folded his arms. Lots and lots of people came into the room. Then the piano began to play, and presently the people clapped and stamped, though there was nothing to clap at. I got hotter and hotter. It was 'citing. At last a bell rang, and the curtain rolled up to the ceiling, and there was a scene. Lovely! Green fields, and trees, and a river, and a chair, and table, and lots of flowers, and plants, and a pretty house, and standing by the table with her lovely hair all hanging down and waving 'bout, 'cause there was a draught, was my Cis. How the people clapped! She was beaut'fuller far than the lady at the circus who jumped through the hoops. I shouted and clapped too, and called out:

"Oh! Jock, isn't she lovely! lovely!! sweet!!!"

And then I knew I had done a most drefful thing. All the people had stopped clapping suddenly, and I had shouted when they were quite silent. And they began to laugh and clap again, and eyes were all round mestaring and laughing eyes. I got hotter than any warm room could make me, and wanted to cry and get to Cecil, and I couldn't. I looked round for somewhere to hide, and Mr. Alan stretched out his arms. In a minute I jumped on his knee, and hid my face against his shoulder. He put his big strong arms round me tightly, and pressed his cheek against my hair, but didn't say a word. Only presently he whispered:

"It's all right, little Dollie-girl. Don't you want to

see sister Cecil acting? Peep out, no one's looking now."

So I kept tight hold and looked at Cecil. She was talking to Mr. Dalton. How had he got there? Every time she spoke the people laughed. It was horrid!

"Why do they laugh at her?" I whispered, nearly ready to cry. "It's rude!"

"No, it's all right. She is saying funny things. Listen!"

I did. But I couldn't make out any of the funniness. The people kept on laughing, and Cecil didn't seem to mind, so I s'posed it was all right. I slipped down on Mr. Alan's knee, and held his arm round me for fear the people should look at me again. But they didn't. They looked at Cecil. When she went out I didn't care for it. The people didn't jump through hoops, or throw balls, or turn somersaults, or do anything funny. I clapped whenever Cecil came on, but nothing else was worth anything. They did nothing but talk.

Then it began not to be nice. Cecil changed her dress, and put on a black one, and had her hair up again, and Mr. Dalton talked to her, and she didn't like him, and once he caught hold of her hand, and she pulled it away, and said, "Oh, don't!" and looked as though she wanted to run away only she daren't. And nobody helped her! I knelt up again, and put my arms close round Mr. Alan's neck. "Why doesn't somebody stop him?" I whispered. "Oh, poor Cis! she's frightened. Do tell somebody to send him away."

"It's all right, Dollie," he said softly. "She is only acting. She isn't really frightened."

But she was. She was more than frightened; and she kept walking away, and he went after her. Then Dick came in, and I thought it would be all right. But it wasn't. 'Stead of hitting Mr. Dalton he took his part, and Cecil got frighteneder than ever, and begged them to leave her in peace, and said she never, never would! I don't know what they wanted.

I began to cry, but quite quietly so that no one could hear. "Oh! Cecil, dearest, darling Cecil! Why don't they help her? Alan, won't you go?"

"Hush! Dollie, hush! It's only acting. She doesn't mind. I'll take you to her soon. Don't cry, girlie."

But I couldn't help. I clung tightly, and sobbed in a whisper, and kept peeping out to see what Cecil was doing. Matters grew worse. She sat down in the chair, and laid her head on the table, and cried. Mr. Dalton went close to her, and put his horrid hand on her pretty hair, and stroked it.

"Why does Dick let him?" I sobbed. "Oh, darling Cis! Now, she'll have to wash her hair to wash the nasty touch off."

Mr. Alan didn't like it, either. He went rather white, and his lips shut tightly, but he was kind. "Will she, little one?"

"Yes. He kissed me once, and I had to wash twice with hot water and Cecil's best scented soap 'fore it felt nice again. And it's such a business with long hair. I always help and pour cold water over her at the end, and she says, 'Oh, Dollie, that's enough!' And the drying is such a work! When it's finished we are so ashausted we have to go to town next holiday, and have buns and ginger beer to make us well again."

Mr. Alan listened, and said, "Don't look, Dollie," and I whispered so low that no one said "Hush!" I didn't look for ever so long, 'cause I didn't want to see, but at last I was 'bliged. Cecil called out suddenly, "Oh, help me! will no one help?"

Mr. Dalton had put his arm round her and was dragging her away. And no one went to her! The curtain went down, and everybody clapped and clapped as though they were glad she was frightened. I cried worse than ever. "What are they doing to her ahind that horrid curtain? Are they hurting her? They must be, or she wouldn't call out like that. Oh, Cecil! Cecil!"

My breath wouldn't come properly, and it felt choky, and I was hot and cold all over, and quite damp.

Mr. Alan whispered something to Mrs. Garland, and jumped up and carried me out. "Why didn't some one save her?" I sobbed, shaking all over. "And Dick was horrid! I wouldn't have b'lieved it of him. Alan, why don't they help her?"

"Hush, little one. It's really all right. She's laughing now, and enjoying herself. I'm taking you to her. There, don't sob like that. Poor little baby! I never thought of her being frightened."

"It's all right, Dollie," said Jock eagerly. "She is only acting. People act all kind of things. She didn't want anyone to help. Don't cry, Dollie."

Mr. Alan carried me through a dark passage, and into a little room. Cecil was sitting there talking. She said, "Dollie, what is it?"

Mr. Alan put me on her lap, and said something in a low tone. Cecil began kissing and loving me. "My baby! my poor little baby! Was she frightened?"

"Oh, Cecil," I sobbed, clasping her neck, "did they hurt you? They were horrid! It was cruel, cruel. And Dick was no good. Poor, darling Cecil! Mr. Dalton ought to be sent to prison."

"Little goosey!" said Cecil. "I told you it was acting. It's all fun, Dollie. I enjoyed it."

"Did you, truly, and pos'tively, Cis?" I asked, trying to stop sobbing. "Weren't you crying?"

"Of course not. Only pretending. See my eyes. Do they look as though they had been shedding tears?"

I 'zamined them. They didn't a bit. They were laughing.

"They are all nasty paint, and your cheeks too. You aren't so pretty as usual, Cis."

"I dare say I'm not, but people always paint their faces when they act, and gracious! I'm rubbing mine off on to you."

"Didn't Mr. Dalton really hurt you?"

"Of course I didn't, Dollie," said Mr. Dalton with his nasty smile. "I wouldn't hurt her for worlds. I'm a horrid man in the act."

I stared at him gravely. "Why didn't you be a nice one for a change?" I asked, but Cecil put her hand suddenly over my mouth and choked the words back again, so no one heard.

"I'm afraid she has given you a lot of trouble, Mr. McKenzie," said Cecil. "I'm very sorry. Dollie, why couldn't you be good, and stay with Mrs. Garland?"

"It's all right. I didn't mind. Poor little thing! She cried pitifully when you were frightened," said Mr. Alan. He smiled too, but his was nice.

"I don't know what to do," said Cecil. "I must finish now. What shall I do with you, Dollie?"

"I'll take care of her," said Mr. Alan. "She'll not be afraid again, will you Dollie?"

Mr. Franklin whispered, "I'll tell you a secret, but you mustn't tell anyone else but Jock and Mr. Alan. If Mr. Dalton frightens sister Cecil again I will rush in and knock him down, and take care of her. So don't be

afraid. If you see her getting terrified just say to your-self, 'Mr. Franklin will be here in a minute.'"

"Very well," I 'greed eagerly. "Couldn't you be there in time to hinder him?"

"No, I'm afraid I can't manage that; but you'll see."

"Just let me whisper, Mr. Franklin. Won't you knock him very, very hard, please?"

"Come, Dollie," said Dick impatiently. "Time's up. Off you go. No end obliged, McKenzie."

"I don't want to speak to you," I said, gravely. "You didn't stand by Cecil, so I shan't be friends."

Mr. Alan laughed, and picked me up out of Cecil's lap. She said, "Now, you'll be a good girl and not cry again?"

"I'll try!" I said, putting my arm round Mr. Alan's neck.

"You seem to be a favourite with the young lady," said Mr. Dalton. He smiled nastier than ever.

"I'm used to children," said Mr. Alan. But he didn't like Mr. Dalton any more than I did, and he sounded stiff, and spoke very shortly.

"Good plan, sometimes; but sisters' tastes don't always run alike," said Mr. Dalton.

He looked ugly.

Mr. Alan got rather white, but he only said," If so it's fortunate for you," and walked away.

When he got outside he said, "Brute!" He said it low, like one does when one wants to let out something that feels as though it won't stay in another second, and yet one is 'fraid of mother or Cecil hearing, and saying, 'I'm shocked, Dollie!' Only no one could say, 'Shocked!' to Mr. Alan.

"Don't you think she will have to bother to wash her

hair?" I asked. "It is such heavy work. P'raps if she brushed it very hard it might do as well."

- "Maybe she likes to have his touch on," said Mr. Alan. He looked rather mis'rubble.
- "Oh, I don't think she poss'bly can. Don't you like him doing it, any more than I do?"
  - "No, I don't, Dollie, and that's a fact."
- "I'll tell you something to make you quite comferable and happy inside," I said, squeeging him hard. He was a nice man. "Mr. Franklin is going to knock him down if he does it again, and I begged him to do it hard."

Mr. Alan laughed, and said something 'bout 'quaint little mortal,' but he was glad.

We didn't go up to the front again, but sat right at the back. Things weren't much better, and I didn't like it, but Jock knelt 'side us on the form, and whispered, "It's all right, Dollie," and, "It's only acting," and, "Wait for Mr. Franklin."

Dick's meanness was beyond everything. He backed Mr. Dalton up, and was even nasty on his own 'count. I didn't wonder Cecil would have nothing to do with him, and called him a 'spicable cur. He was the 'spicablest cur that ever was. Just when things got so bad one didn't know what would happen next and Mr. Dalton was trying to get hold of her hand again, Mr. Franklin rushed in and knocked him down bang, and put his arm round dearest Cecil. I must have been mistaken 'bout the people not caring she was hurt 'fore. They all began to laugh and clap and cheer. I was so 'cited I clapped as loud as I could, and shouted," "Do it again, Mr. Franklin, do it again. That'll teach him!" and everybody clapped and laughed louder than ever.

It was soon over after that. Cecil held on to Mr. Franklin's arm, and the curtain went down, and the gas went up, and everybody came crowding round us and saying things. Mr. Alan got rather red, but he laughed when I hid my face on his shoulder.

"There's Miss Cecil," called out Jock, and I jumped down and got hold of her hand, and kissed it. People were talking to her, and laughing a heap. Cecil was rosy all over, but she wasn't cross. She held my hand, and said, "Never again! never again! She's too young. Come to bed, Dollie."

She talked to me while I was undressing, and told me that I mustn't say Mr. Dalton was a brute, not even if Mr. Alan did. When I was nearly ready I thought of of something.

- "Oh, Cecil, I want to see Jock."
- "You can see him to-morrow."
- "But it's something most 'portant, Cecil."
- "It must wait,"
- "It wouldn't take a minute."
- "Dollie, I really can't go chasing about for Mr. McKenzie. The positions you children put me in are most embarrassing."
- "I don't want Mr. Alan. I just want Jock for one little tiny second. Can't I have my dressing gown on, and speak to him? Do say 'yes,' Cis. You've no idea how very 'portant it is."
  - "Tell me, and I'll let him know."
- "It's private. I hear him coming up stairs. Oh, Cecil!"

Cecil said something to herself, and opened the door.

"Come in for a minute, Jock. Now, Dollie, make haste."

- "You won't listen, Cecil?"
- "No, but be quick."

So I put my arms round Jock's neck, and whispered very, very softly, "I'm 'greeable, Jock. Alan can be Cecil's prince. He is kind and dear."

#### CHAPTER XVII

#### THE HYDRA AGAIN

- "Dollie, we are going up the hills, and will take our books. I'm tired, and want quiet."
  - "May I find Jock and tell him, Cis?"
- "No! If we meet him well and good; if not you must do without him to-day."

It seemed a pity. But when Cecil speaks like that it is better not to make any 'jections, or one may find it dis'greeable 'fore one knows where one is. We started to climb, and didn't meet anyone till we were out of sight of Sunnyside. Then we saw Jock sitting on a stone. He jumped off.

- "Are you going for a walk, Miss Cecil? May I come too?"
  - "I don't mind; but you must ask your brother."
- "Alan," said Jock, "Miss Cecil wants you to come with us."
- "With pleasure," said Mr. Alan getting up. He had been lying on the grass ahind the rock.

Cecil gave a big "Oh!" and they both looked at each other, and burst out laughing.

#### THE HYDRA AGAIN

"Did you ever know anything like a child's ability for placing one in awkward positions?" asked Cecil.

"Never! except their cleverness in putting one into delightful ones."

Jock and I ran ahead. The words were too long for us. When we turned back we saw them still standing there. Cecil was shaking her head, but at last they both came after us. It was no fun walking slowly all the time, so we ran races, and played follow my leader, and horses and all kind of things. When we got a long way Cecil sat on the grass and said, "I came out for rest and quietness. Don't let me detain you, Mr. McKenzie."

"I'll rest and be quiet, too," said Mr. Alan.

"Can we go and play?" asked Jock. "Alan, will you lend me your drinking cup?"

"And me my club, Alan."

"Dollie!" Cecil looked shocked. "What has become of your manners?"

"Aren't they the pink of perfection, Cis?" I asked, s'prised.

"They are not, indeed! What did you say?"

"I asked for my club?"

"What else?"

"Nothing else. Jock asked for the cup."

"I mean what ought you to have said?"

"Please!" I whispered. "I'm sorry."

"I don't mean that. What else?"

"I oughtn't to have said that it was my club."

Mr. Alan laughed. "Quite unconscious, I believe. I suppose it is useless my saying I shouldn't mind had it been otherwise?"

"Quite," said Cecil gravely. "I cannot allow her to take liberties. Dollie, you were very rude to Mr. McKenzie."

I got red, and knelt down and softly took hold of his hand in both mine. "Was I? I'm very, very sorry. I wouldn't be rude for worlds. You were sweet to me yesterday. What did I say, Cis.?"

Mr. Alan smiled, and patted my cheek, and looked at Cecil. He looked as though he were teasing, but 'course grown-ups don't tease. Cecil felt the heat of the day very much. She was 'bliged to fan herself with her pocket hankershiff.

"You must say Mr. Alan," she said. When one has been walking a lot one doesn't always feel the heat, but when one sits down it comes suddenly. This was the way it was with Cecil. She felt it more than ever. "I suppose it is useless insisting on 'Mr. McKenzie.'"

"Didn't I?" I asked, s'priseder than 'fore. "What did I say then, Cecil?"

"Yes, what did she say?" asked Mr. Alan in a low tone. He looked at Cecil, but she didn't at him.

She bit her lip hard, and said, "You left out the Mr., Dollie. Never let me hear you do it again."

"I won't, if I can help it," I said earnestly. "It must be with Jock saying it all the time. But I didn't 'tend to be rude, I didn't really. I'll 'member the 'Mr.' next time, Alan. Will you forgive me? It was a shocking manner."

They both began to laugh, so I knew they had forgiven me. If one says 'forgive me' very perlitely, and promises to be a good girl in the future, grown-ups always say it's all right.

"Don't go too far," said Cecil.

Grown-ups often say 'don't go too far.' This is fortunate 'cause one doesn't know azactly how long 'too far ' is, so one goes as far as one likes, and hopes it is not being naughty.

- "Where are we now, Jock," I asked when we had had a good run. 'Course I knew really we were on the hills at Seacomb, but if one asks questions like that of Jock, he tells 'citing things.
- "We are in the midst of the Desert of Sahara," he said 'pressively, and I gave a little jump of delight. I thought we were somewhere nice. "We are Indians, and have travelled many a weary mile from our homes, and have eaten all the food, and drunk all our water, and there isn't a bit or drop left. Our poor, old, feeble parents—that's Alan and Miss Cecil, you know, Dollie—"
- "Cecil isn't a old, feeble parent," I said crossly. "I told you 'fore she isn't old. She shan't be called it. It's rude!"
  - "It isn't, Dollie! Would I call Alan a rude name?"
  - "Well, she shan't be it. She must be something else."

Jock sighed. "You do spoil things at times, Dollie, but I s'pose I shall have to be p'lite. Do you mind if she's a poor, middle-aged parent?"

It didn't sound much perliter, but as Jock said, if I wouldn't let her be called old, and she really wasn't young, what else was there left? There didn't seem to be anything. 'Sides I wanted to play. So I 'greed, and asked what they were doing.

"They were too tired to go any further, and have sunk down to die. But we are stronger, and must go on and find water to revive them."

I knew Jock wanted that drinking cup for something. "We must get them food as well," I said.

"That isn't so 'portant as water. Alan says it's a thousand times worse to be thirsty than hungry. Your tongue gets all black and cracked and parched, and I b'lieve it hangs out of your mouth."

It sounded horrid! I felt worried. I was thirsty, but

I didn't want my tongue to get black, and was sure Cecil would be cross, and say, "Shocking manners!" again, if it hung out of my mouth. I stuck it out as far as I could and tried to see what it was like. I couldn't see much but the little I did was pink and all right.

Jock said we must look for water at once or it might be too late.

"Is there any up here?" I asked.

"I don't know. If there isn't it will take us all the longer to find it. Let's start."

So we looked carefully in every d'rection but couldn't see a sign. Jock said we must lie down with our ears close to the ground. We could often hear things that way. But I didn't hear anything 'cept the buz-a-buz which the insecks made all the time; and a nasty earwig came out and got on my hair. Jock knocked it off, but I wouldn't listen for water again, so he did it himself.

"Do I hear a roar?" he asked.

" Is it a lion, Jock?"

"No: I hope it's a waterfall, but am afraid it's only the sea."

We could hear the sea athout lying down to listen. It boomed along all the while.

Jock shook his head gravely, "Are there any animals about? If so there must be water. We must track them to their drinking places."

"There are some,—" I began eagerly, I was going to say, 'sheep,' but stopped in time. "What are they, lock?"

"Tigers, I think," said Jock, making a telescope of his two hands, "or else bears. Let us follow their tracks. This is a path they have made."

It was a very little track but we went along it. Sometimes it went away altogether and there was

nothing but grass, and then we had to seek carefully. At last we stopped 'cause we couldn't get any further. Jock said it was the brink of a prec'pice. When we looked over we could see a long way down. Jock lay flat, and leaned over the edge.

"There is often water at the foot of precipices, Dollie. I can't see any here, though. There is nothing but stones.

I laid down aside him, and peeped. In some parts it sloped down and one might be able to scramble, but where we were was one big drop with nothing atween us and the bottom, which was covered with rocks, and stones, and bare patches. I leaned over further and further 'zamining the ground carefully for water, and suddenly gave a big jump. I was rather a long way out, and if Jock hadn't grabbed my frock there might have been an accident. He pulled me back.

"Do be careful, Dollie! If you had fallen you might have torn your frock, or been killed, and Alan and Miss Cecil would have been cross."

I didn't care. I leaned over again, and looked harder. "It is—I b'lieve it is—I'm almost quite sure—I am, Jock." I wriggled back, and spoke in a low whisper.

" It's there again."

Jock was a sensible boy. He always knew what one meant. If it had been the doctor's Bessie I should have had to asplain right out 'fore she would have guessed, but Jock knew in a minute.

"The hydra? Is it? Are you sure? Oh, Dollie, where? Point him out."

We both lay flat again, and Jock tried to see the place.
"I don't see. Are you quite sure? By that big boulder?"

" No, azactly underneath, on that bare patch."

- "Beneath? Where? Oh, I see—it is—it is! I can only see one head, though."
  - "And a nasty long curly neck," I added.
- "But no body," went on Jock. "It must be out of sight behind those rocks. Isn't it a horrid beast! Do you think it's asleep? It isn't moving."
- "What a blessing it's such a long way down," I whispered.

Jock pulled himself up. He was very hot. "Dollie, we must try and kill him. We have been 'Hunters' such a long time; we must be 'And Slayers.'"

- "Jock, I just daren't go down that prec'pice, and fight the hydra with only your sword and my club. I just daren't, so it's no good saying anything; and Cecil wouldn't like it, either."
- "I don't want to go down, I would be afraid myself. But can't we throw stones on to the top of it? We must, Dollie! Think how pleased Alan and Cecil would be, and how clever they would think us if we could say, 'We have killed the hydra.' Oh, Dollie, let's!"
- "If we hurt it," I 'jected, (I felt truly uneasy), "it might climb up here, and eat us."
- "I don't think it could. And it's a long way down, we should have time to run away if it started. What a pity we haven't studied it's habits before this."

We set to work, and c'lected a big store of stones, the largest we could find. There were lots 'bout.

- "What a pity we can't push this one down," I said, laying my hand on a big boulder. "It hangs right over the very place, but I'm 'fraid it's too heavy."
- "That's a grand idea!" said Jock eagerly. "I wonder if we could. Alan showed me how to send a stone over once. He pushed his stick under it like this, and put a

small stone under the stick like this, and pressed his weight on it like—Oh! Dollie, it moved—it positively did! We can do it. Look here! I'll press, and you press too, and the minute the stone starts throw down all the others we have c'lected and p'raps some of them will hit him."

We were both 'cited. Jock arranged everything, and then we pressed. It moved, but it didn't start. We pressed again, but it didn't start.

"We must do it, Dollie. Both press together, and when I say 'three,' jerk! Are you ready? One, two, three." We jerked. "One, two, three." We jerked harder. "Again. One, two, three!" The stick fell flat, and we fell on the top of it and the stone gave one big jump from the top to the bottom. I was so 'stonished I lay still, but Jock got up, and began throwing the others. "Come on, Dollie," he shouted.

When we had sent the last one down we lay on the ground again, and peeped over. There was a fearful sight. At first we could see nothing but dust and stones flying 'bout in all ways, and we thought we had done it by throwing them down, but when it was quiet for a minute we saw it wasn't us at all. It was the hydra. First it lay quite still, then it began lashing 'bout, and twisting, and curling, and all the stones flew again. It balanced up in the air, and then fell down, bang! and curled, and twisted again. It was fearful to behold! Then it was quiet again. Then it all began over. Jock said it was in it's death flurry. It had a lot of them. It lay still, and then it death flurried, and it lay still, and death flurried. Jock and I held each other's hands fast. My heart was pumping at a rate. Jock said his was too.

"I can only see one head, Jock," I whispered. We didn't like to speak out loud.

"I b'lieve I can see two," whispered Jock, "but no body."

"Why can't we? Oh! Jock, do you think the other seven will be climbing up here to kill us?"

"They can't. They must be fastened to that one. Look, Dollie, he is beginning again. I don't think it lasted quite such a long time. P'raps he's growing weaker."

"Why can't we see the rest of him, Jock?"

"P'raps the stone has fallen on him, or p'raps it has blocked all the other heads in his den, and this one was outside to keep guard."

"Jock, do you think this one can be cut off, and the others are coming round, after all? Let's go to Cecil."

"No, wait a bit, Dollie. I really don't think they can. If it were cut off wouldn't it be dead? And, anyhow, we can see a long way round here. It couldn't come without us finding out."

I peeped over my shoulder, but there wasn't a living thing to be seen, 'cept a few tigers eating the grass.

The time that it death flurried grew shorter and shorter, and the time that it lay still grew longer and longer. At last it lay still athout flurrying.

Jock stood up very, very solemn. "Dollie, we are 'And Slayers.' Let us go and tell Alan."

We had one more look, but it lay quite still.

It was dead.

We ran back as fast as we could. There was a weight off my mind.

Cecil and Mr. Alan were still talking. Grown ups do talk a lot, and no one says "chatterbox" to them.

"Cecil," I said, tumbling into her lap, "we've killed the hydra."

Grown ups are s'prisinger than anything. Cecil

gave me a kiss, and said, "Have you, pet? That's clever "just as if I had said I had made a big jump, or hemmed a whole side of a duster, or learnt my verse athout one mistake.

Jock got red. He said, "It's true, Alan. He's dead. We saw him down a prec'pice, and threw stones at him till we killed him."

"Jock," said Mr. Alan, rather quickly. "You've no business to play that hydra game. You'll frighten Dollie. Surely you can think of something nicer."

"But he isn't a game, Alan. He's a real. He was a game once, but he got out of it."

"But he was out first of all," I said. "Don't you 'member, Jock?"

"'Course. He was out first, then we put him in, and then he got out again. But he's dead now."

"Well," said Mr. Alan "if he's dead there's an end of him. Don't let me hear any more about the subject."

"But won't you come and look at his dead body?" asked lock, dis'pointed.

Mr. Alan sat up, and talked very ser'usly. "Look here, Jock. You have a most brilliant imagination—where you got it from goodness only knows—but when you talk about imaginary things as though they were actual facts you are verging rather too closely upon storytelling. Do you understand? I told you before there isn't such a thing as a hydra. There is nothing upon these hills which can do you the least harm."

"But there is, Alan. We've seen it. How could we have seen a thing that isn't? We've seen it, Alan."

"Yes," I said; "we've seen it, Alan."

"Dollie!" said Cecil, sternly.

She whispered something, and I said at once, "I'm sorry. I didn't want to be rude again—I mean Mr."

Mr. Alan laughed, and Cecil made a queer kind of noise ahind me.

- "Alan, won't you come and see it?" begged Jock.
  "I'm not making up; it's there."
- "Now, listen to me, Jock. You imagine things till I believe you scarcely know yourself whether they are fact or fiction. You'll get into trouble if you persist like that."
- "I do know whether a thing is real or not," said Jock rather angrily, "I know I make things up, but I don't say made ups are real when they're not, do I, Dollie? You always know, don't you?"
- "'Course I do," I said crossly. "Those sheep are 'maginary tigers, and this is a 'maginary Desert of--what's the name of the place, Jock?"
- "Sahara—where Alan said he'd be happy if Miss Cecil would play with him."
- "Oh, yes! and you and Cecil are our poor, middle aged, feeble, 'maginary parents—Jock wanted to call you poor old, feeble parents, but you aren't old, are you Cis? You are only middle aged—but the hydra isn't 'maginary at all. It's as real as—as real as real."

Mr. Alan looked at Ceoil, and bit his lip, and pulled his moustache as though he wanted it to come off. It must have hurt. Cecil hid her face in my hair, and shaked all over till it wasn't comferable on her lap, and made funny squeaky noises again.

- "Alan, come and look at it," begged Jock.
- "Hadn't we better see what they've been up to?" asked Cecil, taking her face out of my hair. She felt the heat again.
- "I don't like it!" said Mr. Alan. "I shall not be able to trust the boy's word if he goes in for such flights of imagination. Look here, Jock, be a good lad, admit it's

only a game, and we'll say no more about the matter; but if I come, and find you are deceiving—for it comes to that—well, there will be the strap."

"Oh, don't!" whispered Cecil softly. "He believes it. He doesn't mean to be naughty."

"But he mustn't believe it. How am I to tell whether to trust him or not?"

"I don't know what you mean," said Jock. "But the hydra's dead, isn't he, Dollie?"

"As dead as a door nail," I 'greed.

"Let us see what they have been doing," said Cecil.
"Jump up, Dollie!"

Mr. Alan didn't seem to want, but he did at last. I think he wanted to stay there and go on talking, but if Cis wouldn't there was no one to talk to. It is better to go where one doesn't want and be with people, than stay where one does and be alone.

"I'll leave my book and parasol," said Cecil. "It isn't time to go home yet. Now, Dollie, let us see your hydra. Is it far?"

"Not very. At least it isn't far to where you can see it. It's rather a long way to get at it. It's at the foot of a prec'pice, Jock says. A foot of a prec'pice is a long way down a hole with no sides and no opp'site to it."

Cecil and Mr. Alan laughed, and said "Graphic description."

When we got near the place Jock and I ran ahead, and lay down on the ground to look over. But they didn't give us any chance. Cecil grabbed my frock, and Mr Alan Jock's leg, and pulled us back.

Cecil was very pale.

"You naughty child! Have you been leaning over there? It's frightfully dangerous."

"You didn't tell me not to, Cis. And you can't poss'bly see the hydra athout lying down."

"Then it will go unseen," said Cecil, quite crossly.
"You might have been killed."

"Alan, I can't show it to you 'less you'll lie down," begged Jock. "Let me show you. I shan't fall; we watched it ever so long, didn't we, Dollie?"

"I'm not going to sprawl there, Jock."

"Oh, do, please do, Alan!"

"Do, do, Mr. Alan!" I begged. "You may never get another chance. One doesn't find a hydra every day."

Mr. Alan said something in a low tone to himself.

"Never mind, Alan!" said Jock, earnestly. "I'll brush your trowsers when we get home."

Mr. Alan got very red, and Cecil looked another way, and shaked a lot again.

"I really wish Mr. McKenzie, if you don't mind, that you would see what they have been doing."

So Mr. Alan lay down. "Now for it! but mind, Jock, if it's a trick I shall be angry."

Jock was too 'cited to care. "Look straight down, Alan, on that bare patch of ground right below—not on the very rough part—where that one big boulder is that we rolled over."

"Don't see anything."

"Let me look, Alan. I won't fall."

Mr. Alan took hold of his coat, and Jock pointed eagerly. "It's on that brown part where—wait a minute, I can't quite see it yet—p'raps it wasn't that one—all the parts are alike. But that was the boulder. I'm sure that was the boulder. Dollie!"

He knelt up with a scared face. "Dollie! it's gone!"
"It can't be," I said pulling my hand away from Cecil,
and lying down too. Mr. Alan took tight hold of me.

"That's the place, Jock. Wait a bit. It's lying still, you know. That's why we can't see it."

"That's the boulder, isn't it, Dollie?"

"Yes, and that's the bare brown patch. P'raps it's got a bit better and crawled away."

We looked everywhere, but it was no use.

It had gone!

It is a drefful feeling to leave a dead hydra in a place, and come back and find it gone.

"P'raps the other eight heads have carried it away, and now are seeking for us," I whispered.

Mr. Alan pulled us up, and looked at Jock.

"Well, what am I to think?"

"I don't know, Alan."

"What was there?"

"The hydra."

"I think we'll go back, Miss Sinclair."

Cecil took hold my hand, but Jock walked ahind. She talked a lot to Mr. Alan about a 'very little fellow,' and 'having really seen something,' and 'not being harsh,' but I don't know what she meant.

I pulled my hand away and went back to Jock. He was thinking very hard. "Where can it have gone to, Dollie? I can't understand it. We did see it, didn't we?"

"Oh, yes! we saw it all right. I'm sure, Jock, quite, quite sure. Will Mr. Alan be angry?"

"I dare say. But where is it?"

"The other heads must have carried it away."

"Let's go back, Dollie."

"We mustn't look over again, you know, Jock. They told us not."

" I didn't promise," said Jock.

He sat down, and hugged his knees, and put his chin on them.

"I must find him, Dollie. Alan doesn't b'lieve I really saw him. He thinks he's a 'maginary hydra. 'Maginary, indeed! As if I didn't know the difference 'tween a 'maginary thing and a real one. I know what I'm going to do. I'm going down that precipice."

"Oh, Jock, you mustn't! It's not safe!"

"Yes, it is. There are paths in some parts. I shall go down a safe part, and walk along the bottom till I find it."

"If it isn't dead it might kill you," I said, timidly.

"Alan said there was nothing here to hurt us. It may be one of those things that are very ugly to look at but don't do any harm. Anyhow, I'm going."

Jock got up and walked back to another part of the prec'pice. There was a path. It looked dang'rous. But he didn't care.

"Will you come or not, Dollie?"

I didn't like to come, but I didn't like to stay alone. Mr. Alan and Cecil were out of sight, and what should I do if the hydra met me on the way back! I would rather go down that path.

"I'll help you, Dollie, and I'll carry your club till we get to the bottom. What a good thing we have the club and sword."

They didn't sound much pertection.

We started carefully. The path wasn't much.

"Do you think, Jock, it has been made by the—" I began, and stopped. I didn't quite know whether they were tigers, or had gone back to sheep again.

"We can't manage tigers and a hydra at the same time, Dollie. I guess they'll have to be sheep for the present. 'Maginary tigers in a 'maginary Desert of Sahara aren't nearly so 'citing as a real hydra down a real precipice." They weren't. But they weren't so frightening either. When I thought of the hydra prickles came all over me, but I didn't think of him much. There was enough to do in thinking of getting down safely. I was sure Cecil wouldn't like it. Stones kept rolling from under me and making me sit down suddenly and go on walking athout getting on to my feet again. It wasn't 'greeable.

"Oh, Dollie," said Jock anshusly, when I walked down quite a long way on my front. "You are a fearful 'sponsibility. I almost wish you had stayed at the top. You could have waited, and if the hydra eat me you could have broken the news to Alan."

"You said it wouldn't hurt us," I said. "Just wait a minute, Jock, till the cry doesn't want to come out. Look at my knees."

They were scratched, and there was a little blood. Jock rubbed them softly, and tied our hankershiffs round them, and when I felt better we went on.

"It isn't far now, Dollie. We are more than half way down, and it isn't so steep.

"How are we to get up again?"

"We won't bother to think of that till we have to. Now give me your hand and we'll have one little run.
. . . Oh, I'm so sorry! Have you banged your sore knees again?"

"Not-not much. Oh, Jock! your head's bleeding."

"It doesn't matter. Boys don't care about such things. Now, where are we? Look at the top."

We walked along looking at the ground and ahind stones, and then at the top of the prec'pice to find the azact place.

"That's the spot, Dollie," whispered Jock. "I am sure of it. Can't you see where the stone has scraped off the earth on it's way down?"

We held each other's hand tightly, and seeked everywhere, but nothing was to be seen. Then we got braver. One does feel braver when there is nothing which frightens one. We left go of hands, and ran ahind rocks, and poked bushes, only we made no noise. Jock said he didn't want to frighten the hydra away, but I shouldn't have minded that. But if it was frightened of us it didn't sound very dang'rous. There was nothing to be seen.

"Can it be a fairy, Jock?" I asked.

"No; never heard of a fairy hydra."

"I b'lieve this is the boulder," I said running round it. Then I stopped. The top of the prec'pice came down to the bottom, and the bottom went up to the top. I dropped my club and ran, but it felt like running upside down.

Jock ran after me. "What is it, Dollie? Is it there? Don't be frightened! I've got my sword."

The top went up again, and the bottom came down. "No, it isn't—it isn't there, but it's bloody, Jock,—bloody—bloody all over—pools and patches—and splashes."

Jock went very pale, and pressed his lips together. "How horrid! but it proves, doesn't it, Dollie? Let me see."

"You won't let go my hand," I begged. "Promise you won't let go."

"I won't," said Jock earnestly. "But come to the other side so I can use my sword."

He held it tightly, and we went round the boulder again. It was horrid! There was blood everywhere. It made me feel sick.

"Let's go to Cecil," I whispered. "Jock, let's go to Cecil."

Jock nodded. He felt sick too. "It's like a butcher's shop. I saw them kill a pig once."

We picked up the club and went. It was a long way to the top but we managed it. When we found Cecil and Mr. Alan again Jock said:

"Alan, the hydra-"

Mr. Alan said, "I don't want to hear anything more, Jock. Don't let me ever hear you mention the word again."

Jock and I walked home, and talked 'bout the hydra the whole way, but we didn't let Mr. Alan hear.

#### CHAPTER XVIII

#### WE START FOR DEATH OR GLORY

"Jock, is there anything the matter? Are you poorly?"

Jock was sitting on the grass hugging his knees, and his chin on the top again. He said this was a good way for thinking. He hadn't come to play after breakfast, and he hadn't been with Cecil and me to the beach, and I didn't know where he had been. And when we came back after bathing there he was sitting by himself.

He shook his head when I asked 'bout being poorly, and said, "No, Dollie, but I'm unhappy."

" Is it Mr. Alan?"

"Yes. We've had a long talk, and we don't think alike."

"Is he cross?"

"Not 'zactly cross. I asked him if he was going to strap me, and he said 'no,' he hated punishing. He said he didn't know what to think; he wanted to be just, but I was getting beyond him. A woman might understand and manage me better. As if she could!" burst out Jock. "Alan manages me beautifully."

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- "What else did he do?"
- "He 'splained a lot about there never being such a thing as a hydra, and that it was no more real than a fairy or a brownie, or things of that kind. I told him we'd seen it."
  - "What did he say to that?"
- "He said we couldn't have, and told me to say what it was like. Well, you know, Dollie, we haven't ever seen it properly, but I told about the long twisty necks, and horrid heads, and he said there was nothing of that kind about. When we had talked a heap he said, 'Well, Jock, I thought you would have believed me when I said there wasn't such a thing; ' and I said, 'I thought you would have b'lieved me, Alan, when I told you I'd seen it.'"
  - "Oh, Jock," I whispered. "Wasn't it naughty?"
- "I didn't mean to be naughty, Dollie. Alan gave a little laugh, but it didn't sound happy or pleased, and he said if I couldn't b'lieve him, and he couldn't b'lieve me nothing remained but to agree to differ. I don't want to agree to differ from Alan; and I want him to b'lieve me. I asked if we were to be friends any more, and he said, 'Yes, as good friends as it's possible to be when we doubt each other's word.' It's very, very mis'rubble! He might just as well have said, 'No' straight out."
  - "Did you tell him 'bout all the blood?"
- "No, I didn't. I thought it would only be another thing he couldn't b'lieve, so I kept it private. Did you tell Miss Cecil?"
- "No; she would have been cross 'bout me going down the prec'pice."
- "The world's a very unhappy place, Dollie, when Alan is only 'as good friends as it's possible to be.'"

Jock sat still, and looked sadder than ever. When I had waited a long time I said, "Come and play, and p'raps you'll forget."

"I don't want to play, and I don't want to forget. I want to think of some plan to prove to Alan I'm not telling stories. He says he doesn't 'zactly think I am doing that, but I'm making a mistake. I call a mistake like that as bad as a story. Don't talk, Dollie, let me think."

So he thought, and thought, and I sat very still. I couldn't go and play with Jock so unhappy. What would be the good of being a chum if one were to go away in time of trouble? I tried to think of a plan too. But I wasn't so good at plans as Jock, and one wouldn't come. But I wanted to comfort him, so thought of something, and whispered:

"Jock, there's pie for dinner. Cook told me."

Jock sighed. "I don't much care. I'd as soon have rice pudding."

Can anyone 'magine a boy being mis'rubbler than that? Pie is so very nice. Rice pudding is so very nasty.

Alfred came and asked us to play, but Jock only shook his head.

- "You come then, Dollie," said Alfred, but I wouldn't.
- "You can go, Dollie, if you like," said Jock. "I don't feel like playing at all this morning."
- "I'm not going, I'll stay here. I don't want to play either."

Alfred teased for a bit, but when he found neither of us would go he went away cross.

Jock left go of his knees for a minute, and shook hands. "You are my true chum, Dollie. Alan says, be as long you like about choosing a chum, but when you have

chosen stick to him through thick and thin. This is a bit thick."

I was glad I had stayed. Jock stood by me the night I was so frightened of the hydra, even though he might have been made a martyr, so it was a good thing I could do something for him too; though sitting and not saying much can't count up to being a martyr, only fortunately he wasn't. So we sat 'bout talking all the rest of the morning, only every now and then I whispered, "Has the plan come yet, Jock?"

And he said, "Not yet."

When dinner time came we walked in very slowly and solemnly. The things didn't taste nearly so good as usual, 'cept the pie.

As soon as it was over Jock went out again to think. I went to Cecil. She was talking to Mrs. Garland.

Mrs. Garland said, "You do look poorly, my dear. Is anything the matter?"

"A nasty headache," said Cecil, pressing her hand on her forehead. "I'm afraid I stayed too long in the water this morning."

"You ought to lie down."

"Yes. A nap will probably do me good. Dollie must play about this afternoon instead of going a walk."

"I'm going up the hills for a stroll. She can come with me. I have a book to read, and shall sit there till tea time, so you needn't worry about her. You'll come with me, Dollie, won't you?"

"Yes," I said gravely, "if dear Cecil doesn't want me."

Cecil smiled, and shook her head. "Thank you, very much, Mrs. Garland. It is good of you. I think I'll

lie down at once. Dollie can play till you are ready."

She went away, and I was going to run after her when Mrs. Garland asked, "Won't you stay with me, Dollie, and be my little girl this afternoon till sister's better?"

"I'll come back," I promised. "But I must tuck Cecil up, and draw down the blinds, and make her quite comferable."

"Is it very bad, Cecil?" I asked, when she was settled.

"It is rather, pet."

"Wouldn't you like me to sit with you? I can read my book, and play quietly."

"No, thank you, baby. I shall soon be asleep. Run along, and don't give Mrs. Garland any trouble."

So I kissed her, and smoothed her pillow, and said, "Sweet dreams, dearest," and shut the door so softly no one could hear it."

Mr. Alan was tramping down the passage. I held up my finger. "Hush! you musn't make any noise."

He smiled at me. "Mustn't I, little Dollie-girl? Then I won't. What's the matter?"

"Dearest Cecil is poorly. She has a headache, and gone to lie down, and mustn't be 'sturbed."

"I'm very sorry. I hope it isn't much. What has given her a headache?"

"Staying in the water too long," I asplained, taking hold of his hand, and walking downstairs quietly. Mr. Alan was kind. He didn't make a noise either. "It is rather bad, so she has put on her dressing gown, the pink one with the lace round the neck, and I took down her hair—you have no idea what a lot of pins it needs to keep it up. When one thinks one really has found the

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last another pokes out. Now I'm going with Mrs Garland on the hills."

"Well, goodbye for the present, then, Dollie. I'm going to town. I hope sister will soon be all right again."

"I'll tell her when I see her; but she mustn't be waked, you know."

"Not for worlds!" said Mr. Alan.

I waved at him from the front door, and he took off his hat just as if Cecil were with me. He was a true gentleman.

Then I went to Mrs. Garland. She was looking for me with a yellow letter. "Dollie, I'm so sorry, little one. I have had a telegram, and must go to town at once, so there's no walk on the hills for us this afternoon. I haven't a minute to spare if I'm to catch the train."

So I waved her off at the front door. It felt rather lonely in a big, big house all by myself, with Cecil asleep, and Mrs. Garland off by train, and not knowing where Jock was. It felt solemn. I was just thinking it would be best to go back softly and sit with Cecil, when Jock came tramping down the corridor. He was seeking for me. He had a paper in his hand. His face was bright, and he was walking quickly. The plan had come.

"Jock," I whispered, clapping my hands. "You have thought!"

Jock nodded. "Yes, it's a plan. It may be dangerous, but it can't be helped. I must do it, and I'm going to do it."

"What is it, Jock? Tell me."

Jock pressed close, and whispered ever so low, so that no one could hear, though there wasn't a person about 'cept him and me. "I'm going up the hills again to find the dead body."

I nearly tumbled off the seat, though it was such a broad one that my legs stuck out straight in front when I sat back. "Oh, Jock! And s'pose it isn't dead?"

"Then I'll find the live one."

"Oh, Jock!" I said again. "All by yourself?"

Jock was silent for a little. Then he said slowly, "Yes; all by myself, if you won't come with me, Dollie."

I almost wished I wasn't Jock's chum.

" Jock, it's very naughty."

"I b'lieve it is," said Jock gravely. "But I don't care!"

He said that. Said it straight out. Not just, 'Oh, I don't think it is,' or 'we haven't been told not,' but 'I don't care.' It was wickeder than wicked!

"I can't help it, Dollie. I'm mis'rubble."

"S'pose it eats you," I whispered.

"Alan says there's nothing dangerous on the hills."

"But s'pose it does?"

"I must risk it. I might as well be eaten as not be friends with Alan. It's no good, Dollie, I'm going. But p'raps it would be better for you not to. It might not be safe for a little girl. You had better stay at home."

I didn't like Jock talking like that, as though he was a grown up and I was a child. I began to think I would go. But when I tried to say the words my mouth was so dry they wouldn't come out, and I thought I wouldn't; then I thought of poor Jock looking for a hydra all by himself, and I thought I would; then I thought of it's being alive, and eating us up, and I thought I wouldn't; then I thought of finding the dead body, and how proud Cecil would be, and I thought I would again.

It is queer what a lot of thoughts come into one's head, and how they turn both ways.

"When are you going?" I asked.

"Now."

"I'll go with you, Jock," I burst out.

Jock only said, "Oh, Dollie!" but he was very glad. It gives one a queer feeling to go hunting a hydra all by oneself. As soon as I had spoken I felt frightened, and wished the words hadn't come. But it was too late.

"I've written to Alan," said Jock, opening the paper which he was carrying. "I don't want him not to know where I've gone if I never come back. Shall I read it to you?"

It was very solemn to be making plans for never coming back. If the hydra were not dang'rous it was int'resting, but if it were it wasn't so nice.

Jock sat beside me, and read his letter.

"Dere Alan,

"I told you the trooth about the hidrer, tho' you didn't bleeve me. I carn't bare you not to bleeve so I'm going up the hills to find the ded body. I shal not cum bak till I find it, or till it is dark. I hop you'll not be kros, but if I find it it will pruve.

"From your affekshunat brother "Jock."

" P.S."

"What does P.S. mean?" I asked.

"It means I've forgotten to say something in the letter so I'm putting it at the end."

"It seems a long meaning for two such little letters, Jock."

"It does; but Alan told me, so it's all right.

"P.S. Number 1. If the hidrer eats me I shan't cum bak even when it's dark.

"P.S. Number 2. This is not ment for nortiness, only I carn't bare you not to bleeve.

"P.S. Number 3. I have taken 12 of your biskits. This is not stelling. I have put my last tuppence under your shaving box. The biskits cost one penny for six.

"That's all, Dollie."

"Hadn't you better put in another P.S. and tell him I'm going too? I shouldn't like Cecil not to know what had become of me if we never came back."

Something came up into my throat, and I had to swallow hard to get it down again.

"'Course! I forgot! How will this do?

"P.S. Number 4. Doli is coming with me."

Jock was a very bad speller. He spelt a lot worse than I did. It is very rude to make remarks upon a person's mistakes Cecil says, but I was 'fraid no one would know who it was. He spelt 'Dollie' D-o-l-i.

"Jock," I said, "I don't want to be not perlite, but that isn't the way to spell 'Dollie'"

Jock was a very good tempered boy. He wasn't vexed a bit. "Isn't it? Alan says I am a horrid speller. He says I incline to the phonekit."

"What's a phonekit?"

"That's when a person spells just how he likes, and the other person has to guess what it means."

"Oh! But don't make me a phonekit, Jock. I want Cecil to know, not to have to guess."

"All right. How do you spell it? D-o-l-l-i-e? Is that right? Now, I must take it to our room, and then we'll start."

"Just put in 'Dollie sends her love to Cecil and hopes she'll forgive her everything she's done naughty, and if the hydra doesn't eat her she'll be a better girl, and never dis'bey her again; and Mr. Alan is to give her a million kisses from her,'" I said sadly.

So Jock wrote it down. He said he didn't know how many noughts one has to put after a one to make up a million, but he'd put twelve to be on the safe side.

"Shall you put it on the dressing table, Jock?"

"No. He might find it there and come after us before we had time to do what we want. I shall pin it inside his topper, and then he'll find it when he goes to Church on Sunday. I'll not be long."

While Jock was away I was very frightened. One is so much more frightened when one is alone than when people are 'bout. And one is often more frightened of a thing 'fore it happens then while it is happening all the time. And sometimes one is 'fraid of a happen which never happens at all. This is queer, but it is true. When he came back he brought his two sheaths, but not the swords. He fastened one on him, and I fastened one on me.

"But, Jock, wooden swords really are not very much use against a hydra."

"They are not. I am not going to take them. I am going to ask Rose for sharp carving knives."

Cold trickles came down my back where I keep my spine. "But Jock, she'll never give them to us."

"Then," said Jock setting his teeth very hard together, "then I shall take them when she's not looking."

I nearly tumbled off the seat again. We were going to be wickeder than real Rovers or Amazons. We were going to steal knives.

"I shall ask first," said Jock. "We'll be straight if we can."

We went to the pantry. Rose was there. Jock said,

"Please, Rose, I want two sharp carving knives, the sharpest you've got."

I thought Rose would have said, "Then you'll have to want, Master Jock," or something nasty like that. She didn't. She went to the box and said, "Dear me! what will the folks want next? You'll be careful not to cut yourself, Master Jock, nor little Miss Dollie either, won't you? Give me a kiss, Miss Dollie, pet, won't vou?"

I was so glad she had saved us from being thieves that I hugged her hard, and she said I was a darling. She was very nice. I knew she would be sorry if the hydra eat us, and we never came back.

Then we started. We walked out of the house, no one told us not to, and across the lawn. Mr. Franklin was lying there. He leaned up on his elbow, and said:

"Hullo, little people! where are you off to?"

Tock said, "Private business."

Mr. Franklin laid down again. "Sorry I spoke."

I felt sorry too. It makes one feel so very cur'us when people say 'private,' worse than one felt 'fore. And he had always been kind. I knelt by him and whispered:

"We don't want to be rude, you know, Mr. Franklin, but it really is so very private. We just can't tell."

He smiled, quite a kind sort of smile, but so sad. "All right, Dollie. I see it can't be helped. I'll try and bear up."

It is painful to bear up. I wished I could think of something to soften the dis'pointment. But it was no use, so we left him and walked on. Presently we caught sight of Miss Lacy.

"Wait a bit, Jock," I said eagerly. "I want to speak to Miss Lacy."

"You mustn't tell her, you know," warned Jock. "It

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would be safer to go straight on, Dollie. We may get stopped if we hang about like this."

"I won't be more than a minute," I promised. "I'm not going to say a word 'bout the hydra. Miss Lacy! hi! Miss Lacy! will you wait, please. I want to speak."

Miss Lacy stopped, and smiled. "Well, little one, what is it?"

"It's Mr. Franklin," I asplained. "I'm 'fraid he's very much hurt."

Miss Lacy went quite pale. She said, "Hurt!" in a queer sort of way, and put up one hand against her chest.

"We couldn't help it," I said, sadly. "You see he wanted to know where we were going, and we couldn't tell him, 'cause it's so truly private. But I know he felt hurt 'bout it. Anybody would. And I thought p'raps—you're his chum, aren't you, Miss Lacy?"

Miss Lacy went quite rosy this time, and began to laugh. "His chum, Dollie? What makes you think that?"

"'Cause he always walks with you, and tells you things, and talks a lot, and saves seats for you to be by him, like Jock does for me."

Miss Lacy got rosier than ever. She said, "Gracious!" Then she laughed again, and said, "Gracious!" a second time.

"Aren't you his chum?" I asked.

"Well-er-perhaps I am-a little, you know, Dollie. What of it?"

"Only a little," I said dis'pointed. "I thought it was a lot. I thought p'raps if you were you could go and comfort him. Things aren't nearly so bad to bear when one has a chum to say, 'Cheer up!' and 'P'raps you'll

be told soon.' And Mr. Franklin has been so very good to us. Won't you be his true chum? Please do. I know he would feel heaps better. Wouldn't he, Jock?"

Jock nodded gravely, and Miss Lacy whispered, "Quaint little mortal!" to herself. Then she smiled and walked away athout promising, but I looked back when we were nearly out of sight and saw that she was turning down to the path which led to the lawn, and I guessed it would be all right. It made my heart feel lighter.

"Jock," I asked, "do you know what a quaint little mortal is?"

- "No: what is it?"
- " I'm one."
- "What is it, then?"
- "I don't know. Lots of people say it to me. I asked Cecil once if it meant naughty, but she only laughed and said, 'Not azactly.' I wish I knew. Are you quaint? I don't like being by myself."
  - "I don't know, but I will be, if you like, Dollie. You have stood by me like a brick, and I'll stand by you. I'll ask Alan how to be it when we get back, if ever we do."

This made me think unhappy thoughts again. We got to the gate. It was drefful to push it open, and think we might never, never do it again. It might be for the last time. And when we got through and let it swing back again it gave such a doleful clang. It never clanged that way when Cecil was with us, and we were going out walks. Even dead things like gates seem to know when things are dang'rous, and make dif'rent noises to usual.

We stood and looked at it for quite a long time. Then

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Jock turned away. He stretched out his hand to me. It was nice of him. One doesn't feel so frightened when one has hold of anybody.

"Now, Dollie," he said, "come along. It is on to death or glory."

#### CHAPTER XIX

#### WHAT WE FOUND UP THE HILLS

We walked straight up the hill. I wanted to keep looking back, but Jock wouldn't let me. He said when one has started to do a thing one should never look back, nor think back, either. It is no good, and only wastes time when one might be making plans how to do it.

I wanted to talk 'bout how blue the sky was, and what pretty fleecy clouds, and wasn't the weather beaut'ful, and how soft and pleasant the grass felt under our feet, so much less tiring than the hard road, and all kinds of grown up things like that which are not int'resting as a rule, but anything was better than speaking of the hydra. But Jock wouldn't. He talked of the hydra the whole time. He said:

"You know, Dollie, even if it is not quite dead, and I am nearly quite sure it must be, it will be feeling very weak and poorly with a broken neck. I had a broken arm once, and you have no idea how bad it made me. I didn't care a bit for anything. If Alfred had hit me I shouldn't have tried to hit him back, or anything. I really b'lieve I should have cried. I just wanted to be

let alone, and sit on Alan's knee. And a broken neck must be worse than a broken arm. If a boy had a broken neck he would be certain to be killed, but then he has only one. A hydra has eight more to help him on. But all the same, Dollie, he must be feeling bad."

I hoped he was, as bad as poss'ble, and wished Jock would talk of something else, but he wouldn't. He hydra'd the whole time.

It was a long way to the place, so it took us a long time. Jock wanted to hurry, but I wouldn't. Cecil didn't like me to get too hot. Jock said when one was doing a great big naughty he didn't see that it mattered if one put in a few little extra naughties or not. But I didn't think that way. If one really felt 'bliged to do a big naughty one should be all the more 'ticular not to do anything but just what was necessary. That was what I thought. And, anyhow, Cis had never told me not to go hydra hunting, but she had often said, 'I wish you wouldn't heat yourself so much, child!' I wasn't going to do what dearest Cecil didn't like. So when Jock found I wouldn't, he couldn't.

We came to a small stream, and had drinks, and washed our hands, and bathed our faces, then we went on again.

I asked, "Jock, are you quite sure you know the right way?"

Jock said he was, and I needn't be 'fraid 'bout that. I was much more 'fraid that he did know it than that he didn't, but I didn't say so. There are some things one doesn't like to tell even to one's chief chum.

But I noticed after a while that 'stead of turning to go up to the top of the cliffs we were going on straight. This was quite wrong. I felt very glad. I didn't say anything to Jock, 'cause when a person is sure they know the way sometimes they are cross if one tries to tell them diff'rent. And 'sides, if we went a long way wrong, p'raps we shouldn't have time to go all the way back, and then find the right road afterwards. We should have to go home when it was dark. One can not hunt hydras when there is no light. But the sun was a long way up in the sky. There didn't seem much chance. Then it was mean to poor Jock not to tell. And p'raps he might wait till the moon came out. It would be just like him.

So at last I said, "This isn't the way to the top of the cliff, is it, Jock?"

"Oh, no! What's the good of going to the top? We should only have to scramble down again. We are going straight to the bottom. I b'lieve we shall see the beginnings of it when we get round that little hill."

It was quite true.

I got cold all over.

"But," I said, with the words all coming out in little pieces, "wou—wouldn't it b—be safer at the t—top? S'pose it isn't d—dead?"

"We must run risks," said Jock.

The grass got less, and the stones and rocks got more, and presently there wasn't any grass at all, but just hard path, and shingles, and boulders, and Jock said we must be wary, 'cause this was 'bout the place, and any minute we might find the remains. Jock said he really b'lieved it would be quite dead, but there was always a chance, and we must be cautious, as we didn't want to be eaten. When he wasn't looking I bit my hand as hard as I could. I tried to do it harder, but it hurt so I was just 'bliged to stop. It would be very painful to be eaten.

"Dollie," said Jock, "if you'll give me a push I could

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get to the top of this rock, and see if it is lying anywhere in sight."

So he climbed up, and looked carefully but there wasn't a sign.

"One good thing," he said, sliding down again, "we know it was close to the cliff, so there is no good in wasting time by seeking far away."

"But it had left the place where it was, and we can't tell where it's gone. It might be anywhere."

"That's true! but I've thought out what we must do. We must look for the rock where we saw all the blood, and track him by his gore."

"Oh, Jock! how horrid! And the rocks are all alike, too. We may never find the right one."

"We shall not give in without a good try. And another thing! Flies always like messy things like blood, so we must keep a look out for lots of flies."

" Jock! you do think of horrid things!"

"They are very useful, Dollie, if you intend to have 'ventures when you're a man. You should always try and 'member int'resting things like that. You've no idea what it might do for you in other lands, you know. I'm going to visit other lands when I grow up."

"If the hydra doesn't eat you," I 'minded him.

We scrambled along 'zamining the ground, and round every boulder. Jock said it would have been easier if we had made up our minds to go on yesterday when the track was fresh, but it was no good crying over spilt milk. I looked at the sun a good many times as well as I could for the light, but it didn't seem even to move.

At last Jock stopped and pointed to some marks.

"That's the blood, Dollie," he whispered. "Now we're on the right path."

It didn't look like blood, but I didn't say a word. We

might spend all our time in following the wrong thing if I didn't say anything. 'Sides, it's wrong to argue, Cecil says.

Jock pulled out his knife to be ready, but after tumbling down two or three times, and nearly cutting himself he thought it would be just as handy in the sheath, and a good deal safer."

We followed the brown marks. Sometimes there were a lot of them, and other times we couldn't see any, and had to seek, but we always found them again, and I began to be 'fraid Jock was right.

Then they grew thicker and thicker, and at last—we both stopped quite suddenly.

There it was again!

It was horrible to behold! It was a mass of blood from head to foot, only it hadn't got a foot. That was the worst of it. It was only part of the hydra. I could feel my heart beating so loud it nearly deafened me, and Jock was as white as white.

We stood perfeckly still.

It never moved.

"It's quite dead, Dollie," Jock whispered at last.

My teeth were chattering so much that at first I couldn't get out a word. It is a queer thing that when one's teeth chatter one isn't speaking. Chattering doesn't mean talking like when Dick says, "Don't chatter, Dollie!" It only means knocking up and down against each other very fast.

I put up my hand and took hold of my chin, and managed to speak plainly. "S-s-s'pose it isn't, Jock?"

Jock grabbed his knife fast, and coughed softly, but the hydra didn't move; then he coughed louder, but it didn't move; then he said "Scat!" but it never scatted.

"I wonder where the rest of it is, Jock?" I whispered.

Jock picked up a stone and threw it. It fell right on the hydra's head, and it took no notice. Then we walked up to it, and 'zamined it carefully. There wasn't any body, and no legs, and no feet, and just one head, and a long twisty neck, and it was blood nearly all over. Jock said the rock we threw down must have fallen on the neck, and smashed it quite off the rest of the body, and the chances were the other heads were so frightened and in such pain they had gone quite away, and left this one to its fate. It seemed very cruel of them. I thought p'raps they were hiding, and would come out to take revenge.

"Let's go now, Jock," I begged. "It looks so drefful! Can't we go home? I want Cecil; you don't know how much I want her."

"All right, Dollie. There's nothing else to stay for now, and it does look nasty. But we've proved, haven't we?"

Then another thought came and burst out of its own accord.

- "No, Jock, we haven't proved a bit."
- "But you can see it's dead, Dollie, can't you? If you can see a dead hydra there must have been a live one."
- "But it's only us who see it," I whispered, "and we didn't want to prove—we knew it 'fore. Mr. Alan doesn't see it, and he won't b'lieve now any more than he did."

Jock grew very pale again, and groaned quite loudly. I grabbed his arm, and begged him to groan in a whisper if he must do it at all. No one could tell how near the rest of the hydra might be.

"I never thought of that, Dollie," he whispered. "I never thought of that. What good have we done by

coming all this way? What shall we do? Oh, dear! Oh dear!" and he groaned again, but softly this time.

It really seemed waste. I tried to think what to say. Jock was never very long in making up his mind bout things, and very soon he spoke.

"There's only one thing to be done. One of us must stay here, and see that the hydra doesn't escape again, and the other must go back and beg Alan to come."

I said quite perlitely, but as firm as firm. "Jock, I don't want to be mean, but I will not stay here by myself, and I will not go back by myself either; so there!"

Jock is a boy who doesn't get cross 'bout things, he says crossness doesn't pay, and Mr. Alan won't have it, so he wasn't angry, but tried to coax.

"I'll stay here, Dollie, 'course, but would you mind very much going home—even if I were to go as far as where the grass begins, so you would be on the safe part?"

"Yes, I should. I'm very sorry, Jock, but I daren't! And s'pose it should eat you 'fore I got back—the other heads, I mean. We should never really know if you were eaten or only taken prisoner, or lost some other way, and Cecil says s'pence is worse than anything."

"I've thought about that. 'Course if I disappeared Alan would hunt the hydra till he had killed it, and then you would know."

"We might, if it hadn't 'gested you 'fore it was dead. Cecil says when a thing is 'gested one can't tell what it has been."

"Neither you could. Let's see! Oh, I have it! Do you see this coin? It's a French penny. I'm c'lecting coins."

"Are you? So is Dick. He has boxes full. How my have you?"

"Only this French penny so far. But you see if the hydra eat me it couldn't digest the penny too, so you would have to look in its inside for that, and if it were there you would know that I had been some time."

I began to cry. "Your plans are horrider than ever, and I daren't go, Jock, I daren't, and I won't! I wish I dare, and I would."

Jock was very kind. "Don't cry, Dollie. You can't help it, and I know it isn't meant for nastiness. Can we think of some other plan?"

It was good of him. I stopped crying, and thought hard. "It's too big to drag home," I said, sadly. "Could we cut off enough just to show?"

"I am an idiot!" burst out Jock. "'Course! That's the proper thing to do. Hunters always cut off the heads of creatures. I'm afraid we shall make ourselves in an awful mess, but it can't be helped."

We did. I never saw such a messy job in all my life. It was quite 'gusting. It was a good thing the knives were sharp, or we should never have managed. We had to be as quick as we could, 'cause while one was carving the other was watching so as the rest of it mightn't come up athout us knowing. I stood on a stone and looked 'bout, and Jock chopped and chopped. He got fearfully hot.

"I never saw such a thing, never, Dollie! In lots of the books I have read when a boy killed anything he rushes forward, cuts off it's head, and shouts in triumph, and this thing won't come off, and let me shout in triumph."

"P'raps it's not hydras that they've killed."

"No, oh no! Only common things like lions and tigers. I s'pose hydras are tougher than those. A thing with nine heads is bound to be made different to

others. I'd manage better, only this one has a bone all down it's neck.

I dreffully wanted to leave it, and get away while there was still time, but Jock wouldn't. He said he would get the head off, or know the reason why. The reason why was 'cause it wouldn't come, but Jock said you couldn't know till you had tried.

When he was tired I cut for a bit, and he watched, but it was horrid work, and sometimes when I banged on the knife with a stone to make it go through the head it would reg'larly jump up and frighten me. So Jock said he'd take on the business again.

At last it was off.

It looked nasty and messy when we began, but it looked ten times nastier and messier when we had finished.

"How are we to carry it?" I asked, jumping off the stone, and trying to look at the head with one eye, and keep watching round with the other. This is a thing which can't be done athout practice, and Jock begged me not to forget to keep guard. It would be a drefful dis'pointment if anything went wrong now. "I don't like to touch it, Jock. How are we to carry it?"

"I know," said Jock. "Don't bother yourself, Dollie. You needn't touch it again. You are a brick to have come. I'm glad we're chums."

He took off his coat, and tied up the waist part; then he rolled the head into it, buttoned it up, tied the neck, I took hold of one sleeve and he took the other, and we set off as fast as we could.

We didn't say a word till we had got off the stony part, and on to the grass when we could walk much quicker, and talk too, only we always spoke very softly, for fear.

"We ought to sing a song of victory, Dollie. Don't

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you know one? We really are 'And Slayers.' At one time I never thought we should be. Can you think of a song?"

"Only 'Master Fox,' and 'Margery Daw, ' and 'King Cole,' and that kind. And there is no vict'ry in any of those."

"I don't know one either. It's very unfortunate. Oh, wait a bit! Isn't there something about victorious in 'God Save the King?"

"'Send him victorious,'" I said. "But I don't know the other words, they are so long, 'cept 'God Save our Gracious King.'"

"It's quite enough," said Jock eagerly. "That will do better than the other words, cause I don't think they have anything to do with victory.

So we sang:

"God save our gracious King,
God save our gracious King,
God save our King.
Send him victorious,
Send him victorious,
Send him victorious,
God save our King."

We sang it several times, but it is hard work singing in a whisper. One's throat gets sore, and the music isn't pretty. But we daren't make any more noise. It would have been very trying if the rest of the hydra had heard and come after us. It might have had to sing then.

I didn't feel much like singing, either. We were out of reach of the big boulders, and could see rather a long distance round so it was easier for us to keep a watch, but then it was easier for the hydra too, so it wasn't safer than 'fore. I was getting very tired; it is weary, weary work having to look round and ahind all the

time. Jock tried walking backwards so that he could see one way and I the other, but he fell so many times he had to give it up.

"Never mind, Dollie. We must be nearly at the stream now, and when that is past we shall be safe. I'll show you how to hide our traces when we get there. If you ate a biscuit do you think you'd feel less tired?"

But I didn't want biscuits, or even cake. I wanted Cecil. I tried hard to be brave and not cry. It wouldn't do to cry, 'cause tears make one not able to see plainly.

At last we got to the water. Jock pulled off his shoes and stockings and told me to, and we walked into the stream. It was quite shallow, and quite narrow, we could easily have jumped across, but Jock said this would hide our tracks. So we walked down a long way, and then got out, and dried our feet, and put on our shoes again, and Jock told me we were quite safe now, and could afford to rest awhile.

I asked how he knew the water made us safe, and he said Alan told him. Hunted animals often 'scaped by walking in water. The reason was that there was a smell on the ground where anyone walked. We couldn't smell it, we weren't clever enough, but creatures could. Then when anyone walked in water 'course the water was running away all the time, and p'raps by the time the hydra had tracked us to the stream the special drops we had been in would have run down right into the sea, so there would be no finding it again. It was a splendid idea. I was so thankful we were out of danger. It made us feel much less tired, so we ate the biscuits, and drank some water in our hands, and tried to wash out the nasty stains in our clothes which were enough to make Cecil's hair turn grey, and had a good long rest.

Then we started for Sunnyside again carrying the head

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atween us. It was a wonderful thing to think we had killed it all by ourselves.

"Dollie," said Jock, "we are benefactors to the human race at large."

I felt quite proud of being a benefactor. "What's the human race at large, Jock?"

"Anybody—everybody. Those people down there, and Alan, and Miss Cecil, and Mrs. Garland, and even the King, I think. I'm not quite sure though whether he's a human race. P'raps he's too great for that."

I was much 'pressed. Fancy benefacting everybody in the world, 'cept p'raps the King!

"I wonder if he'll make us dukes or earls, or anything for it?" said Jock. "It would be fun. 'Duke Jock' sounds well, doesn't it? How would you like to be called 'Duchess Dollie?'"

"I shouldn't much mind," I sighed. "At least I think I should like it to-morrow after I've been to bed. A good night's rest makes a world of diff'rence, Cecil says. Just now I'd rather be Cecil's pet and sit on her lap than all the duchesses and earlesses on the earth. Do you mind changing sleeves again, Jock? This hand is so very done up."

Jock was kind. He carried it all part of the way, and made me take hold of his arm as well, though he was very tired himself.

When we got quite close to Sunnyside we forgot nearly all 'bout the hydra, and began thinking of our dirty clothes, and wondering what Cecil and Mr. Alan would say. We hoped to be able to get quietly to our rooms, and change 'fore anybody saw us. Jock promised to fasten my frock for me. But as soon as we got in the house we saw there was no chance. 'Stead of the corridor being empty, like it was when we left, it was

full of people. Everybody seemed there, and so were Cecil and Mr. Alan, sitting together and talking. Cecil's head seemed better. She looked rosy, and was laughing.

When she saw us she held up her hands, and said, "Gracious!"

Then she laughed again, and so did Mr. Alan. "Some people have been having a good time," he said.

"Where's Mrs. Garland, Dollie?" asked Cecil. "And where have you been?"

"Didn't your private tea bell ring, old man?" asked Mr. Alan. "We've all finished long ago."

"Where is Mrs. Garland, Dollie?" 'peated Cecil.

"I don't know, Cis. She went away in a train immejitely after you went to bed. She said she had a telegram."

"Dear me! And you two have been alone all this time? Well, I hope you haven't been in too much mischief. Where have you been?"

"Up the hills, Cecil."

Cecil looked very sober. She just said, "Oh, Dollie!" and I felt how bad it had all been.

"By yourselves?" asked Mr. Alan. "Why did you go?"

"Alan," said Jock. "Can we let you hear about what you said we weren't to let you hear about, or I don't see how we can tell you about it?"

Lots of the people were standing round and listening. It was very uncomferable. It would have been much easier if we had found them by themselves. Some one whispered:

"Delicious! For goodness' sake don't let us miss this explanation."

Mr. Alan pulled his moustache, but we could see he was smiling 'ahind it. The people were smiling too.

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Mr. Alan said, "I don't quite follow your train of reasoning, old chap."

- "You said you wouldn't hear any more about it, Alan, and it's all about it, so will you hear, or I can't tell? That's all that I mean."
- "Old man," said Mr. Alan, leaning his elbow on his knee, and his chin on his hand, "again I fail to follow, but the world is before you. Speak!"
  - "It's the hydra, Alan."
  - "Oh!" said Mr. Alan.
- "I told you we had killed it, and you wouldn't b'lieve, but it was quite true, and I was mis'rubble, and thought of a proof, and Dollie went too, and we've proved, and it is."
  - "Greek!" said Mr. Alan.
- "No, it's not Greek, Alan. It's fact. Let me explain. You know we saw the hydra?"
  - "What's a hydra?" asked a lady.
- "The only one I ever heard about was a nine headed monster which Hercules killed," said a gentleman.
  - "That's the one," said Jock eagerly.
- "No, not that one," I interruckted. "One of his childern. It couldn't be azactly the same one, you know, Jock."
- "'Course not! But there was a hydra, wasn't there?" asked Jock.

Quite a number of people said 'Yes'. They had nearly all heard 'bout it. It was true enough. We hadn't made any mistake.

- "Well, go on, Jock," said Mr. Alan.
- "Oh, wait a bit!" said some one, as though we were telling them, and not only Cecil and Mr. Alan. "Do let us hear from the beginning. Have they been hunting a hydra here? How delightful! Do explain!"

Mr. Alan looked at Cecil, and laughed. Then he said, "Jock, start fair, laddie. When did you first hear about it. Let's have the whole story, and get to the bottom of it, if we can."

I was too shy with all the people round to say anything, so I only held on to my sleeve, and didn't speak. Jock never was shy a bit. He held on to the other sleeve. He began, and told everything quite straight; all 'bout hunting it, and seeing it on the picnic day, and throwing rocks on to it, right up till this afternoon.

Everybody was very, very int'rested, and very, very grave, only they had bad coughs every now and then. When Jock finished Mr. Alan smiled again, but his eyes were kind.

"So you were miserable, my little laddie, were you? Well, I suppose I mustn't be angry with you for trying to prove you were right, but all the same you oughtn't to have gone, you know. Let us hear the end of the adventure."

"It's nearly the end now, isn't it, Dollie?" said Jock, quite happy again. "We went up to where we killed it, and found the blood stains, and tracked them till we got to the hydra—"

"To a bit of it," I whispered. "It wasn't all there, you know, Jock, only the one head we had killed."

"Yes, and we cut off its one head 'cause the neck was so long we couldn't carry it, and brought it here to prove."

"Brought it here? Where? What do you mean? What have you got?"

"One of the hydra's heads, Alan. It's here. I'll let it out."

We unfastened the neck of the jacket, and took hold of the bottom of the coat and shaked the head out.

# WHAT WE FOUND UP THE HILLS 269

You never heard such a noise in your life.

The ladies screamed!

They screamed louder than I ever heard anyone scream in my life afore. Louder than our cat when her tail was caught in the window.

The gentlemen jumped away, and took hold of the ladies' waists.

Cecil didn't scream, but she got dreffully white, and snatched hold of me, and pulled me on her lap. "Oh, Dollie!" she said, and if I hadn't known it was she speaking I should never have guessed. Her voice never sounded that way 'fore. "Oh, Dollie! my baby! my little one! What does this mean? Dick, where are you?"

Mr. Alan caught Jock in his arm. He didn't speak, only stared at the hydra, and his big chest went up and down as if something hurt him. At last he whispered, "What is it? Does anyone know what it is? Does anyone know what it is?"

Everybody had moved away a bit, and the head lay quite alone.

Professor Delancy pushed through the people. He stuck his spectacles on his nose, and turned over the hydra with his foot. Then he said, "Where it comes from I can't say,—at least where it last came from—but it is a—"

Then he said a lot of words which I can't 'member. Jock told me afterwards he thought it was French.

Mr. Alan didn't understand what he meant. He said, "English, professor. Speak English! What is the brute?"

"A python," said the Professor, "a python. Probably from Borneo originally, but how it came to be wandering these hills is beyond me.'

"And is it dangerous?" asked Mr. Alan. His voice was rough and scrapy, and he kept shutting his teeth hard.

Cecil was shaking dreffully. Dick had come from somewhere. He put his arm round her.

"Dangerous?" said the Professor, with a queer kind of laugh. "Well, it has been. I fancy from what the children say that the brute must have seized a sheep the first time they saw it, which will account for two of the heads they saw, and also the woolly body; most likely it's tail was the third. It also explains how they escaped with their lives."

"Oh, don't," said Cecil. "Don't!"

She was shaking worse than ever, and squeeging so tight that it hurt. But she didn't intend, and I tried to bear it.

"But how could it get here?" said Mr. Franklin.

Mr. Alan sat down suddenly, and leaned his face against Jock's head.

"It seems to me," said Mr. Dalton, with his nasty smile. "It seems to me, McKenzie, you have managed to send the children into a horribly dangerous position."

"I?" said Mr. Alan. "What have I to do with it?"

"Well, you know, or ought to know the result of your displeasure upon your devoted little brother; and of course where Jock goes, there will Dollie be. I don't know what Miss Sinclair thinks about the matter but it seems to me that—"

Mr. Alan looked hot and angry.

Mr. Franklin put his hand on his shoulder, and thumped it softly.

"Steady, old fellow!" he whispered.

"Come away, Cecil," said Dick, trying to make her get up. But she pushed him away. "No, don't Dick! I'm

# WHAT WE FOUND UP THE HILLS 271

all right. I must hear! Can any one explain? Oh, do cover the thing up! To think of those children—"

She stopped suddenly.

Mr. Franklin threw Jock's coat over the head. "Come, this won't do. Gentlemen, suppose you take your sisters, and your cousins, and your aunts away. Alan, the children will want their tea. Let's get them out of this. Come, old fellow! Miss Sinclair, let me carry Dollie for you. Sinclair, bring your sister. First, though, I suppose no one can offer any solution of the situation?"

"Curiously enough, I believe I can," said someone, "or at all events give a guess at it."

Everyone turned to look at a gentleman in a velvet coat. He had long hair, and it curled a bit at the ends. We had not seen him fore. He must have come to Sunnyside quite lately.

Hs said, "A short time ago I was sketching some miles from here when I heard such a clatter of wheels and horses' hoofs that I felt certain it was a runaway. I was some little distance from the high road and before getting there heard a crash, and one sharp cry. I hurried on, and found a large caravan overturned and lying in the ditch, while the horses attached to it were struggling madly on the ground. The driver had been flung some distance away, and was motionless and unconscious. I was wondering what was best to be done when a furious hissing attracted my attention, and leaving the unfortunate man for a minute I examined the caravan. To my amazement I found it was a travelling menagerie containing a number of cages of snakes of all kinds and sizes, all of whom were in a violent state of excitement, So far as I could see, though you may be sure I didn't linger, none had escaped. Fortunately a labourer came by, and between us we managed to rig up a temporary

stretcher, and carried the driver to the nearest farm-house, which happened to be my lodgings. There I found a telegram recalling me home immediately. I cycled up to the neighbouring town, reported to the authorities, and then caught my train. A few days later on my return I made some enquiries, and found that the man had died without recovering consciousness, and that some expert in the snake line had taken temporary possession of his creatures."

When the gentleman got there he stopped, and Mr. Franklin said, "Then you think—" then he stopped, too, and the gentleman said,

"I can only suggest it as a probable explanation of the mystery. Either the brute might have escaped as the result of the accident, or perhaps it had somehow freed itself before, and so terrified the horses that they had rushed off in a panic,"

"It sounds to me very likely," said Mr. Franklin. "And of course the authorities would hush the matter up as much as possible. Come, Dollie."

He picked me up, and carried me into a small room where there was a beaut'ful tea laid. He was very pale, but smiled and put me on darling Cecil's lap, and said, "Little girls who have hunted hydras must be hungry and tired."

Jock sat on a chair and had his meal, but Cecil wouldn't let me out of her lap, and I was so tired I didn't want to

#### CHAPTER XX

#### CECIL ACTS AGAIN

Cecil didn't say much to me 'bout things the next day, but what she did was very solemn. She said we had made a mistake bout the hydra, and it wasn't a hydra after all, but a python, and it never had any more than one head. She didn't seem to like to talk about it, so I didn't ask a lot of questions, but Jock and I thought it over. It was queer that the python should be so very like the hydra in my picture book, and that it should be at Sunnyside, too. The only thing we could 'cide was that p'raps a hydra was a python with nine heads, and a python a hydra with only one, and that p'raps our hydra's—no, I mean our python's—father had been a hydra and had married a python, and it had been named after its mother, and taken after her in the matter of heads.

Cecil said if she hadn't had a letter saying that father was so much better that he and mother hoped to come to Sunnyside in a few days she would have had to go home at once. Her nerves had 'ceived a severe shock. I was very, very sorry to have shocked dearest Cecil's nerves. She was kind about my messed clothes, and

didn't even scold me for going up the hills athout leave, but I knew she felt deeply the disgrace of having a little sister who took 'vantage of her having a headache to go out hydra hunting with a chum. She kept me by her nearly all the time, but she didn't like hearing 'bout the hydra, and when people began to say things, and ask me what we had done she said:

"Please, don't speak about it. Dollie, run away and play, but don't go out of sight."

Sometimes they tried to talk to me when I was by myself, but I didn't like it. I was 'fraid they were thinking all the time 'bout my going out athout leave. And when they said I was brave I knew I had been very frightened, so it wasn't true. And when they talked to Jock he didn't care for it, either. He never cared 'bout games that were finished, he only wanted to make up new ones. Some of them said we were a little hero and heroine, and Alfred called it after us till Jock was 'bliged to fight him, and then he had enough of the subject.

It was rather bothering when Cecil wouldn't let me go out to play. I had to sit in her room till she was ready sometimes.

"Cis," I asked. "Can't I play in the garden?"

"I am going to the village soon, Dollie, and you may come with me there."

"But can't I go out and wait till you are ready?"

"Well, just into the garden, but no further."

"If I went to the field I could get you some flowers, Cis."

I often gathered Cecil flowers, and she would wear them. Some of the gentlemen gave her flowers too, but she only said 'Thank you,' ever so perlitely, and carried them in her hands till she went upstairs, and then put them in the vase, or in her tooth glass if the vase was full. She wouldn't wear them, but she always wore mine. I asked her why once, 'cause the flowers were lovely, but she only laughed, and said, "I wear those that are given by the one I love best, pet."

So I thought if Cecil wouldn't wear flowers when she didn't love a person I oughtn't to, either. And one day when Mr. Dalton wanted to pin a big rose on me I said, "I'll hold it, thank you, but you mustn't put it in my dress 'cause I don't love you. Cecil says one oughtn't to wear flowers if one doesn't love the person who gives them. I don't mean this for rudeness, but just to asplain." Mr. Dalton looked angry, and walked away.

Miss Lacy was standing near talking to Cecil, 'bout coming to an afternoon tea. I tried to be good, and not listen, but I couldn't help hearing something bout 'And little Dollie, of course.' Mr. Franklin was there too. He had another rose. He smiled at me and said. "Hullo! Dollie. Never heard that doctrine before. I wonder if it holds good in all cases. Miss Lacy, you heard what Dollie said? Will you accept this rose for your dress?" He was laughing, and looking very funny. Miss Lacy smiled, and stuck it in her belt. "Thank you. very much. No, I didn't hear. Tell me some other time, Dollie." She went on talking to Cecil. I never saw Mr. Franklin look so queer before. He got red. and his eyes were all sparkly. He whispered something to himself bout expecting a snub. I don't know what a snub is, but it seemed a pity Miss Lacy didn't give him one. I'm sure he deserved it.

"Cecil," I said again, "do let me go to the field to get some flowers."

"Very well. I'll come for you soon, Dollie. Get me a nice bunch."

So I ran off, and climbed up the path to the fields and

took a good look round. There were plenty of flowers and I gathered some, and then saw others which were prettier a little way on so threw away the first, and went after them. Flowers always do look nicer when they are further away, and I wanted the very best for Cecil. So I went along, picking them and throwing them away, till I caught sight of someone lying on the grass.

It was Mr. Alan. I thought at first he was asleep 'cause he took no notice, and didn't turn round even when I gave little coughs to let him know someone was there. So at last I walked right round and saw his face. He wasn't sleeping. He wasn't reading. He was just staring straight 'fore him, and his face was all sad and mis'rubble. When he saw me he smiled, and said:

- "Well, little Dollie-girl, what is it?" but though he smiled, he didn't look happy. "Do you want anything, little one?"
  - "Have you a headache?" I asked.
- "Not a headache, girlie, a heartache. You don't know what that is, do you?"
- "Oh yes, I do!" I said earnestly. "It's when Cecil's cross, and won't be friends, and say, 'darling,' or anything nice. And one has a lump here in the chest, and another here in the throat, and if the sun is shining one wouldn't care if it were raining, and if it's raining one doesn't even want it to stop."
- "You've got the symptoms right in every particular, little one," said Mr. Alan.
- "Have you got a heartache?" I asked, sitting down by him, and hugging his head on to my shoulder. "Oh, poor dear! poor dear! I know how bad it feels."

When people have heartaches they like to be petted. It makes them feel rather better. So I patted his hair, and asked:

- "Have you a Cecil who is cross?"
- "I haven't exactly got her; sometimes I fear I never shall have; but she's cross right enough, Dollie."
- "And is she very sweet, and good, and nice, and pretty, like my Cecil?"
  - "Very like her."
- "You must have been doing something very bad to make her angry, Mr. Alan."
- "Humph! You take it for granted that it's my fault, do you?"
  - "It must be, if she is so sweet and good, you know."
- "Upon my word, Dollie, I never looked upon matters quite in that light before," he said very slowly. "I'm not at all sure but what you are right, though."

He didn't say anything more for quite a long time, and I sat very still, only softly patting his hair, and whispering, "Bear up, dearie!" and "Matters will mend!" and "There's a good time coming!" and nice things of that kind.

Then he said again, "I'm not at all sure, after all;" but he wasn't speaking to me, only talking to himself. At last he said, "When you've been very naughty, and sister Cecil is angry, what do you do to make friends again, Dollie?"

- "I get hold of her hand, and say, 'Darling Cecil, do forgive me, and I'll never do it again.'"
  - "And does she always forgive you then?"
- "Nearly always, 'less I've been so bad that she feels it a painful duty to punish me some more. It is very sad when it's a painful duty."
- "It must be," said Mr. Alan quite ser'usly. He understood.
  - "Dollie," said Cecil, "I am quite ready."
  - She had come close to us, and was waiting. She

didn't see Mr. Alan, though it was quite s'prising how she could miss him. He is so very big. But when people are looking very hard at something else they don't always see other somethings.

Mr. Alan jumped up. He took two or three steps very quickly, and caught hold of Cecil's hand. "I'm very sorry, Cecil, very sorry. Don't be angry. Won't you forgive me?"

I was ever so s'prised. It was my Cecil who was vexed with him. No wonder he felt bad.

She pulled her hand away, and looked straight at him.

"I don't know what you mean, Mr. McKenzie. I have no right to be angry with anything you may choose to do. And I never gave you permission to use my Christian name. Dollie, come at once."

She walked away.

Mr. Alan stared after her. He bit his lip hard, and his eyes were angry.

I got hold of his hand. "It's a painful duty," I whispered. "And it's just as trying for her as for you. Dearest Cecil sometimes nearly cries over a painful duty. Oh, Mr. Alan, you must have been bad!"

He looked at me, and the angry went out of his eyes.

"You loyal little soul! Don't you ever think, Dollie, that perhaps sister Cecil is wrong, too?"

"I do when I'm bad, but when I'm good again I know she isn't. You will have to wait a while till you can show by deeds as well as words. That's what mother says. Then you can say you are sorry again."

"I don't think I ever shall," said Mr. Alan sharply. Then he lay flat on the grass again, and said very low:

"What an ass I am! What's the good of saying that when I know as well as possible that I shall do it a dozen times if necessary!"

"I know," I said gravely. "But one likes to say things. I must go, or Cecil will be cross. Goodbye, Mr. Alan, I hope you will soon get into a better frame of mind."

I knew that was a right thing to say 'cause mother often says it to me when I won't say I am sorry.

Mr. Alan stared at me, and then laughed.

"I hope I shall, little Dollie-girl. Run along, now."

It wasn't at all a 'greeable walk. Cecil wouldn't tell fairy tales, nor run races, nor choose which she would have in all the big shop windows if the toy shop men were to say she could have it athout paying, even when I said she could have first choice, though I was dreffully 'fraid she would have the doll's house, and I wanted it so badly. I told her Mr. Alan had a heartache and was mis-rubble, and she said I was not to speak 'bout him. and when I didn't she asked who told me so. And when I said Mr. Alan himself she said if I couldn't talk 'bout anything but him I had better not talk at all, and when I didn't talk at all she asked what he had been saying to me. It was very puzzling. Grown-ups change their minds so very quickly, and are so very cross if one doesn't know their minds have been changed athout their telling one. I had to wink and blink harder and harder, and at last I whispered;

"Am I naughty, Cecil?"

She stopped, and sat down on a stile, and lifted me on her lap. "Poor little girlie! Am I very cross, pet? Things have gone wrong with me, Dollie, and you are getting the benefit of my temper."

I hugged her fast, and told her she was never cross, she was sweet, and I knew children were trying sometimes, but I didn't intend to be.

After this she was kind, but very quiet, and not at all

funny, so I was glad when we came home again, and Jock ran out to meet us, and whisper:

"I've made another game, Dollie. We'll try it after tea."

So as soon as it was over I went into the garden to see what it was. Jock was there waiting. So was Alfred.

"Come along, Dollie," shouted Jock. "Look what I've got. Mrs. Garland was making some reins with bells on for her little boy at home, and the shop people sent her twice as many bells as she ordered by mistake, so she said I might have them if I liked."

They were very pretty. Jock had fastened them on two pieces of tape, and when he moved them they made a jingle.

"Are they in the game?" I asked, giving them a shake. "What do you call it?"

"The Bell Hunters. The bells gave me the idea. I'll tell you how to play. Two of us are the Bell Hunters, and we tie a tape round one of our ancles so as whenever we walk about the bells tinkle. See? The other one is the hunted. The lawn in the middle of the flower-garden can be Home. I'll be the hunted first if you like. You two stay here, and I'll go as far as the gate at the end. When I get there I'll blow this whistle, and you can come after me at once. If you see me before I get to the flower-garden that will be one for you. If I can get there you must catch me before getting to the lawn. Do you understand?"

"I think so," I said, fastening the bells on to my ancle, and jumping so as to hear them sound. "But why do you go further away from Home 'fore you start?"

"That's so as to let you be between me and it," asplained Jock. "You see, I can run faster than you so if I had a start I should be certain to get there first. It

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would be better fun if we had a lot more Bell Hunters. Then we would have catching instead of seeing all the time, but as we haven't we'll do the best we can without. You two can run as fast as you like, but I can hear you if you come close, and hide. You can't hear me. There are a lot of paths and bushes, so it ought to be a good game."

"Go on," said Alfred. "Don't talk such a heap. We know how to play, we do."

Alfred was a rude boy. But Jock didn't take any notice of his rudeness. This is the wisest plan. He ran off and we soon heard his whistle, and then the fun began. It was an int'resting game, and very 'citing when one was the hunted. It was more 'citing to be hunted than the hunters. It made one shaky to come caushumsly creeping down a path and just as one was going to run across another to hear a Bell Hunter tinkling, and have to hide ahind a bush and hug oneself, and try not to say little squeaks 'cause one was so frightened, and pleased, and queer. We all were the hunted in turn. Jock was the best. He was so clever at hiding. But once I had a splendid escape. I had been hidden in one little path for a long time, and couldn't get out 'cause Jock was scampering 'bout at one end, and Alfred keeping watch at the other. Whenever I tried to get away one of them was sure to come tinkling along. I began to think I should be found, and never get home in safety, and I wanted to badly, 'cause Jock had done three times, and Alfred once, and me not at all. Alfred said it was 'cause I was only a girl, and couldn't do things. It isn't nice to be 'only a girl,' and I felt cross. Jock was nice. He said I wasn't 'only a girl,' I was a young lady.

Alfred burst out laughing. "Do you call her a lady? I never did! You'll be calling us gentlemen next."

"I don't think anybody would ever call you a gentleman," I said.

Alfred was very cross, but Jock laughed, and said I had given him one for himself that time. But I didn't feel very happy. Cecil says a true lady never hurts anyone's feelings 'less it is necessary, and I couldn't be quite sure this was one of the necessary times, and it would be drefful not to grow up into a true lady. Dearest Cecil wouldn't own me.

Jock said I was littler than them, and 'sides he felt sure I should manage soon, so that was why I was anshus. But there seemed no chance till Miss Lacy came walking down the path by herself, and I had an idea. Jock said afterwards it was a grand thought, and he would have been proud to have made it up himself.

When she came quite close I whispered softly; "Miss Lacy, please let me talk to you, and don't let anybody know you are listening."

Miss Lacy was ever so kind. She stood with her back to the bush where I was hiding, and said quite loud, so that anyone could hear: "What a lovely prospect!" Then she said very low, "What is it, Dollie?"

I told her I wanted to get past the end of the path athout Jock seeing. She had a long cloak on, and I said, "May I come under, and walk the side of the hedge when we pass where Jock is watching?"

Miss Lacy was a friend indeed.

She whispered, "Yes! come along, quick!"

So I got right under, and she put her arm round my shoulders, and I got hold of her hand, and we walked slowly along. Then 'suddenly I heard tinkle tinkle, and Jock shouted, "Miss Lacy!" and I knew all was over. He was coming to ask if she had seen me. We had

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made up this was fair. Jock said real hunters would ask travellers whom they met, so we could. So I felt sure I was caught, 'cause Miss Lacy couldn't poss'bly say 'No.'

But it didn't happen so. She stood still with me ahind her, and when Jock came up, 'fore he could say a word she asked, 'Have you seen Dollie, Jock?"

I nearly squeaked out loud.

Jock said he was looking for me, and ran off, and Miss Lacy whispered, "Coast's clear, Dollie. Fly!" and held up her cloak. I rushed away and got safe to the flower garden lawn, and blew the whistle.

"How did you get here?" asked Jock. "I felt sure you were in one of those paths up there."

Then I told him, and he said what I told 'fore 'bout being proud if he had thought of it himself. It makes one very happy when one's chum says, "Jove, Dollie! That was a clever thought!"

Jock said 'Jove!' when he was very much s'prised, 'cause Mr. Alan did.

Alfred said it wasn't fair, and oughtn't to count, but lock soon settled him.

After that things weren't so nice. Alfred said if I was going to cheat he was, too. So he took off his bells when he was hunter so that he shouldn't be heard, and when he was hunted he never went to the gate to start, but got ahind us, and ran straight to Home.

Jock soon stopped playing. He said if a fellow wouldn't play fair it was no good playing at all. It was as bad to cheat in a game as to cheat at lessons. Then Alfred turned nasty, and wouldn't play, and wouldn't give Jock his bells either, but ran away with them. Jock ran after him, and I went to look for Cecil. I knew she was in the garden. I had seen her lots of times, so I ran straight to the place where she was 'fore, and was just

going to call out, "Here I am, Cecil," when a nasty voice spoke.

I peeped through, and saw Mr. Dalton. I nearly jumped out of my skin.

These kind of jumps are very uncomferable. Everything 'bout one's inside seems to jump 'cept one's feet, and they won't budge. So it brings everything down again with a jerk. And the reason I jumped was 'cause of what Mr. Dalton and Cecil were doing.

They were playing the act again, and had just got to the part where he has hold of her hand, and she was saying, "Oh, don't!" and beginning to look as though she wanted to run away, only she daren't.

And the worst of it was Cecil must have forgotten to tell Mr. Franklin to be ready, or he hadn't 'membered to come, for he wasn't there. I looked for him all round, and he wasn't anywhere near. Then I came back and peeped through again.

Matters were getting worse just like they did 'fore. Cecil was frightened, and Mr. Dalton said, "It's no use trying to escape, Cecil. There's no help for it. You will have to hear me out this time."

He was close to her. He had black eyes, and black eyes are very ugly. Cecil says this isn't so. She says black eyes are not worse than blue, or brown, or grey, it is only the soul that looks out of them that is ugly. The soul that looked out of Mr. Dalton's eyes was hidjus.

I wondered whatever would happen next, and how it was there was no Mr. Franklin. They were getting very near the time when he ought to stride in and knock Mr. Dalton down, and where was he? Cecil was extra frightened. This was 'cause she knew she had forgotten to ask him to be ready. I kept whispering to myself,

"What can I do? What can I do? If only he would come!"

Then I peeped again, and Cecil suddenly said, "May I trouble you to let me pass, Mr. Dalton."

She said it quite plainly, but he wouldn't be troubled. He never moved an inch out of the way, and she couldn't get by.

There was only one thing to be done. I ran off as fast as poss'ble. There were a lot of people sitting 'bout near the lawn. Cecil always says I must not speak to people if they don't speak to me first. She says grown ups cannot be bothered with little girls, and if they interruct they are a nuisance, but I forgot all 'bout being a nuisance, and as soon as my breath came I asked:

- "Have you seen Mr. Franklin? Does anyone know where he is?"
- "Where's the matter, Dollie?" asked one gentleman. "What's the trouble?"
- "I want Mr. Franklin, please, this very minute."
  - "Won't brother Dick do? There he is."
- "No. Dick isn't a bit of use. He's worse than useless. No one will do but Mr. Franklin. Please, please tell me.",

Mr. Alan took his pipe out of his mouth, and pointed with the end of it. "He went up there, Dollie, some time ago, but where he is now I can't say. Can I do anything?"

I only said, "No, thank you," and rushed off. There were a lot of steps to climb, and it gave me a stitch in my side which made me walk all bent over sideways, but I wouldn't stop. Every minute was precious. No one could tell how soon Mr. Dalton might get to the part where he ought to be knocked down.

What to do if Mr. Franklin couldn't be found I didn't know, but when I came to the top of the steps, and had run a little way further there was a seat, and Mr. Franklin was sitting on it. So was Miss Lacy.

She was saying, "Certainly not, Mr. Franklin."

They looked as though they were having a diffrence of 'pinion. This is a grown up way of quarrelling. I asked Cecil once 'bout it, and she said 'course grown ups didn't quarrel; they had diff'rences of 'pinion. It seems to be the same kind of thing.

I ran up to Mr. Franklin, and got hold of his hand. "Oh, do come, do! They are nearly there. Please come at once, Mr. Franklin."

He didn't want to. He said, "Not just now, little one. Trot away. I'm engaged."

Miss Lacy looked at him, and then looked at the ground. The corners of her mouth gave little twists, and two tiny holes came in her cheeks.

Mr. Franklin began to laugh. "Well, I mean I want to be. Run away, Dollie."

"Please come! You don't know how 'portant it is. Oh, please come, Mr. Franklin." When a person is out of breath with climbing steps and trying not to cry at the same time it is very mis'rubble. I couldn't get the breath prop'ly in my throat. "They're doing the act, Mr. Franklin, Cecil and Mr. Dalton—and it's time for you, and she must have forgotten to tell you. Please—please come."

Mr. Franklin said, "I can't just now, Dollie. Go away, there's a good girl!"

But Miss Lacy put her arm round me. She said, "Stop, Kit; let us hear. What is it, Dollie?"

Mr. Franklin began to act himself. He got hold of Miss Lacy's hand and said, "Oh, Flossie!"

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She pulled it away, but she wasn't frightened. She said, "Stop crying, Dollie, that's a good girl. What is the matter? What are Cecil and Mr. Dalton doing? What do you want with Mr. Franklin?"

"They're acting," I sobbed. "I—I'm trying to stop, Miss Lacy—I am, truly. They've nearly got to the part when it's time for Mr. Franklin to knock him down, and he isn't there. Do ask him to go. Please! And darling Cecil's frightened again. I know she is. He's got hold of her and won't let her go. It's the act."

Mr. Franklin said, "What does the child mean?" But when Miss Lacy whispered to him he gave a long whistle.

"Poor little woman! But I'm afraid I can't interfere this time. Perhaps the lady mightn't like it."

"He's horrid—horrid!" I sobbed.

"He is!" said Miss Lacy. "And Cecil hates him, I know. Couldn't you do anything—couldn't you, Kit?"

"My dear girl! it's out of the question. Look here, Dollie, Dick is the person to ask."

"Dick's no good, Mr. Franklin. You know how mean he was last time. No one was any good but you, and now you won't help. Oh, poor darling Cecil!"

Miss Lacy hugged me, and began whispering to Mr. Franklin again. I could hear little scraps. "Just to walk past, you know;" and "It's a public path;" and "She'll sob herself ill."

At last Mr. Franklin jumped up. "I don't like it, Flossie. It's cheek—that's what I call it—but if you'll come too, I'll chance it for the child's sake."

"And Cecil's, too," said Miss Lacy starting off.
"He's a regular brute. I always disliked him."

"He has such an ugly face, hasn't he?" I whispered. We didn't go back by the steps, but another way

which was shorter. I was dreffully afraid we should be late, but we weren't. We were just in the nick of time.

Mr. Dalton had hold of both Cecil's hands, and she was saying, "Let me go, you coward!" when I ran up and shouted, "We're coming, Cecil."

The minute Mr. Dalton saw Mr. Franklin he left go of Cecil. He looked at all of us but he didn't say a word, only his soul looked uglier than ever, then he walked away very fast. He knew what he had to expect when he saw Mr. Franklin, and he didn't wait to give him a chance.

I took Cecil's hand, and hugged and kissed it. Mr. Franklin stared up at the sky. He was a true hero.

Miss Lacy said, "We're thinking of going down to the beach to see the water by moonlight later on, Cecil. Would you care to come?"

No one said a word 'bout Mr. Dalton. It was very funny. Cecil asked what was the matter with Dollie, and Miss Lacy whispered something, and Cecil said, "Oh, Flossie, I am so thankful!"

Then they talked 'bout lots of things to Mr. Franklin, the moonlight, and the sunset, and what a promise it gave of fine weather, and things. And they walked to the house.

When we got there Cecil said, "I will not come to the beach to-night, thank you. It's time for Dollie to go to bed. Say 'good-night,' pet, and come along."

She went upstairs, and I waited to say 'good-night' and 'thank you' to Mr. Franklin and Miss Lacy.

They were talking together. Miss Lacy said, "I think not, Mr. Franklin," and he said: "You said 'Kit before, Flossie. Goodness knows why you ever took to calling me 'Mr. Franklin' at all, for I don't."

Miss Lacy looked down with the little holes coming in her

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cheeks again. "Advancing years seemed to require it." Then she saw me waiting and said," Dollie shall decide. Don't you think, Dollie, that 'Mr. Franklin' is a much prettier name than 'Kit'? Kit means Christopher, you know, and it isn't nice, is it?"

Mr. Franklin said, "Come, I say, Flossie, that's too bad!"

I said very gravely. "I don't think it matters whether a name is pretty or not. It's what a person likes to be called."

Mr. Franklin laughed. "Good for you, Dollie!"

Then Miss Lacy got pink, and asked, "So you think I ought to oblige him, do you?"

I thought ser'usly. "It's nice to have a big chum who can knock a man down once when he is nasty, and look so severely at him another time that he doesn't even wait to be knocked."

Mr. Franklin burst out laughing again. There! you see, Flossie! Dollie thinks I am the kind of fellow you ought to secure while you have the chance."

They didn't seem to care 'bout saying 'Goodnight', so I went away athout. But I heard Miss Lacy say, "Oh, don't, Kit! Suppose anybody were to see. Oh, how can you?"

I looked back, but I didn't see how he could, nor what he could either.

#### CHAPTER XXI

#### WE SEEK THE NORTH POLE

"Dollie, will you come out and play when you've finished?"

"Not to-day, Jock. Dollie must come with me. I have a treat in store, but she is not to be told till after breakfast, so she must eat a good one."

When grown ups say there is a treat in store, if one isn't very good sometimes it doesn't come off. So I eat my egg like a tidy girl, and didn't make a bit of mess with the yellow, and didn't crumble my bread and butter, and never dropped a single drop of tea on to the white table cloth.

When it was finished I sat still, and asked no questions.

Jock came to whisper, "What is the treat, Dollie? Is it private?"

"I don't know. Cecil hasn't told me yet," I answered quite loud, hoping she would hear, and tell me.

She only laughed. "I'm afraid it isn't for you, Jock. You will not be interested. It's only for Dollie and me."

Jock gave a big sigh. "I'd let Dollie join if it were my treat, Miss Cecil."

"Not if you couldn't, Jock. You see, you won't care."

Jock went away.

When breakfast was over and we had put our room tidy and it was getting time to go out, Cecil said, "Now for the treat! Whom do you suppose is coming, Dollie?"

"Coming here? To Sunnyside? I don't know. Who is, Cecil?"

"Father and mother, and we are going to the station this morning to meet them."

I danced 'bout the room. "Lovely! Lovely! Are we going this very minute? Where is my hat? What time does their train come? Aren't we going to be late?"

Cecil laughed, and stuck two great pins through her hat and hair to fasten it on—the hat I mean. I once tried to fasten mine with a pin and pushed it into my head and made it bleed, and Cecil was cross, and said 'laskit was good enough for a little girl.

"We are going to the village first, Dollie. I have several things to buy. We will start at once. I thought it would be wiser not to tell you till the last minute."

I raced downstairs. Mr. Alan and Jock were standing at the front door. Cecil looked at Mr. Alan's back while she was walking along the passage, and buttoning her glove. Then she said, "Good morning, Mr. McKenzie. Dollie and I are off to town to meet our parents."

Mr. Alan turned round. He was smiling, and quite happyagain. "Are you? I hope Mr. Sinclair is stronger. Can I assist with the luggage, or anything?"

"Thank you, but Dick is coming with them. He didn't think father well enough to manage with only mother."

"We're going fishing, Dollie, if Alan can get his letters done in time. Will you come with us? She may, mayn't she, Alan? That is if Miss Cecil will let her," said Jock.

"Why, Jock, father and mother are coming!"

"I don't think much of fathers and mothers," said Jock. "It isn't as if it were Alan or Miss Cecil."

"I'm sorry to say my little chap knows nothing about fathers and mothers," said Mr. Alan rather sadly. "They are the most important people in the world, aren't they, Dollie?"

"'Cept Cecil. You mustn't forget Cecil, Mr. Alan."

"No," 'greed Mr. Alan gravely. "Except Miss Cecil, of course."

Cecil said it was time we started, and we went off in such a hurry that I had to walk backward to wave my hand, and shout, "Good-bye."

"What time does the train come, Cecil?"

" Eleven thirty."

"This isn't the way to the station, Cis."

"No. There's plenty of time, and I must do some shopping."

We walked 'bout everywhere for a long time. I was 'fraid we should be late, but after I had asked, "Isn't it nearly eleven thirty, now?" quite a number of times Cecil began to say, "Really, Dollie, I wish you wouldn't bother, child!"

So I didn't say it again. Only every time we passed a clock 1 asked wasn't it a pretty one, or did she know that there was one on that church. All this was to 'mind her

athout bothering, and at last we turned into the station. We had ten minutes to spare, so sat down. It was a very long ten minutes. I watched the clock, and the hand seemed to crawl to the VI at the bottom where Cecil said it must get 'fore the time was up.

It went past VI and past the VII, and then Cecil stood up and took hold of my hand. "Here it comes! Keep a good look out, Dollie."

"There's Dick," I shouted, and we ran to the carriage.

Dick jumped out, and helped mother first, and then father. Cecil took some parcels and umbrellas, and gave me a bag to carry, and then we went to a cab athout any top to, and Cecil and Dick went back for the luggage.

Father was very pale, but when he had sat still a few minutes and felt the breeze he brightened up, and when he was better mother was better too, and they both kissed me, and Dick and Cecil got in and we drove off.

"Are you better, father?" asked Cecil.

"Oh, yes, a great deal, dear. Well, how has Dollie got on? She doesn't look much of an invalid now. Have you been good, little one?"

"Yes, very, father. 'Cept just one or two mistakes, and a real naughty 'bout the hydra which was a python. Haven't I, Cis?"

Mother said. "Don't! Let us talk about something else."

So we talked 'bout Sunnyside, and how some people were nice and some weren't. And the air was bracing, and would do father a lot of good. And had the journey been trying?

Then we caught sight of Jock and Mr. Alan. They both took off their hats very perlitely, and Jock put his on

and took it off again to wave to me. And Cecil and I bowed ever so nicely, and I waved my hand to Jock.

"Mother," I said eagerly. "That's Jock. That's my chum. The big gentleman with him is his grown up brother, Mr. Alan. You've no idea how nice he is. He makes up splendid games, and can tell tales as int'resting as Cecil's. We are friends all the time. He comes with us on lots of our walks. And he likes Cecil too, ever so much. He says she is as sweet as a real princess. He liked her from the very beginning, but after the time of the fair he loved her. And she likes him too. She nearly always lets him come with us, and once she kissed him when—"

#### "DOROTHY!"

I had seen mother sitting up straighter and straighter as though her back was tired with leaning, and she wanted to stretch it, but I hadn't taken any notice. It is most startling when a person calls one by one's long name athout any warning.

#### "CECIL!"

It wasn't quite so bad for Cecil as it was for me 'cause she hasn't a longer name, and we use that one every day, but the tone was just as s'prising. Mother always said that when I was a grown up I should have to be called by my long name 'cause Dollie was babyish, but I couldn't have grown up since coming to Sunnyside, could I? It was very puzzling.

Cecil was as red as roses, and shaking all over. She said. "It's quite true, mother. Dollie has a very nice chum, indeed. She thinks a great deal of him, and so do I. A very nice, polite, merry little fellow."

Her voice got shakier and shakier.

Mother leaned back suddenly and said in quite weak low tones, "My dear!"

#### WE SEEK THE NORTH POLE

Dick threw back his head, and roared out so loud that the driver looked ahind to see what was the matter.

Then father asked, "Are there any pleasant walks about, Dick?" and we talked 'walks' and 'views' till we got to Sunnyside.

Somehow it wasn't so nice for a time after father and mother came. This sounds very mean to say, and Cecil says I ought to be ashamed to put it in. I am. But it's true.

Father went out drives in a bath chair with a pony, and Cecil walked beside him. I stayed with mother, and we sat on the beach, or in the garden. It wasn't very good fun.

Mother wouldn't run races, or build castles, and her tales weren't up to much. They truly weren't. And the gentlemen and ladies who came to talk with Cecil, specially the gentlemen, didn't come to mother. Mr. Alan didn't often come, and 'course Jock couldn't, and we didn't have games. It isn't fun playing by oneself when one is used to a chum who can make up new games whenever he wants, and makes even the old ones ten times as int'resting.

- "Can't I come with you, Cecil, darling?" I asked one morning when a lot of us were seeing father start in his chair.
- "No, my pet. Stay with mother, and take care of ber."
- "Mother can't run races, or anything," I said sadly.

Mother laughed. "No, indeed I can't. I'm too old for that kind of thing, Dollie. I used to do when Cecil was tiny."

- "But that's a very, very long time ago," I said.
- "Dollie, that's rude!" said mother.

The ladies and gentlemen laughed, and said, "Oh, Dollie!"

Only Cecil knew I hadn't 'tended. She gave me a kiss, and said, "Quite true, pet," and whispered to me to be patient, and she would take me out as soon as father was stronger, and she could be spared.

And at last one day she didn't go with him as usual. She said "I'm afraid it can only be in the garden, Dollie. I'm too tired for walking, but I'll tell tales if you like"

"P'raps we will find Jock and Mr. Alan," I said, dancing along eagerly, "I haven't had a game for ever so long. Mother doesn't like me paddling, or going out of sight, or lots of things you let me do, Cecil. Why doesn't she?"

"Can't say, Dollie. Perhaps I let you do too much."

"There's Jock," I said, and he came rushing up.

"Are you coming to play again at last, Dollie? Do say 'yes,' Miss Cecil."

"Very well. Off you go, but not out of the garden. I shall sit down and read."

"All right! I'll just tell Alan where you are. We have been on the look out for days, but you were always busy. Come along, Dollie."

We ran off and told Mr. Alan, and I asked, "Can't we have a new game, Jock? It's so long since I had a good time. Do think of something 'citing."

"I've got one. I thought of it some time ago, and at first thought of Alfred, but he always cheats, and then I thought of doing it by myself, but I don't care for games so much by myself as I did, so I waited for you."

"Oh, Jock, how jolly! What is it?"

- "Look what I've got. Alan lent it to me. Do you know what it is?
  - "A compass, isn't it?"
- "Yes. And now, Dollie, we'll find the North Pole."
  - "Where is it?"
- "I don't know. Nobody knows. Nobody has ever been able to find it."
  - "Doesn't Mr. Alan know?"
  - " Not even him."
  - "What has the compass to do with it then?"
- "That's just the queer thing about it. Nobody knows but the compass, and it always points straight to it."

I looked at the compass. It was pointing as straight as it could to the side of the house. Then I looked at Jock to see if he was making fun. But Jock never made fun of that kind. If he said a thing it was true.

He nodded. "No larks, Dollie. It's fact. Alan told me."

- "But, Jock, it's pointing to the house. You can see it is."
- "I don't mean you know, Dollie, that it points straight at the thing. It can't, 'cause it's grillions of miles away; but it points in the direction, and quite at the end of the point—there's the North Pole. Don't you understand?"

"No, I don't, Jock."

Jock thinked. Then he pointed with his finger and said, "Suppose you ask where is the village. I say, 'over there.' I'm pointing at it. But you can't see it 'cause there's a lot of houses and trees, and roads and lanes, and a stream 'tween us. But I'm pointing at it all the same. Now, do you see?"

Jock always made things plain. "I think so," I said, looking at the compass again.

"You see, Dollie, it goes on pointing and all the people have to do is to travel in the way it points. If there is a house in the way they must go round it, if there's a mountain they must cross, if there's a sea they must sail over it. It just points straight all the time."

"Why can't they find it, then? It sounds quite easy."

"'Cause there's such a heap of ice and snow and difficult places. They always get tired before getting there, or the weather is too severe, they can't stand it."

I 'zamined the compass. It was very strange that a little thing like that should know more than anyone, even Mr. Alan. "But we mustn't go out of the garden, Jock. Cecil said so."

"I know that. And I don't mean to find the rea North Pole. I'll wait till I'm a man before doing that. But we can have a play one. Now, Dollie, think what that compass is pointing at which would do for a Pole."

" It's pointing at the house."

"But what's beyond the house? Do try and think, Dollie. It's so much nicer when ohe's chum sees the game without having to be told. Think all along the point. What comes after the house?"

"There's the garden," I whispered, to myself, "and then some bushes, and some trees, and a little river, and the flower-garden, and the lawn, and—I know, Jock, I know," I shouted, clapping my hands. "The flag-staff."

Jock beamed. "That's it, that's it! You are a brick, Dollie! It's such a nuisance to have to tell everything."

"But will that compass always point at the flag-staff
—I mean at our North Pole?"

"I b'lieve it does so long as we keep this side of it. You see we should have to pass it on the way to the real one. That's why. Now, shall we start? There's a ship up here. I'm the captain, and you're the mate. Come along, my hearty, let's join the ship."

Jock stuck his hands in his pockets, and rolled from side to side as he walked. I hadn't pockets, 'cept one underneath, so I put my hands 'gainst my sides and did like him. We looked for the ship. 'Course it couldn't be a real one. If I hadn't known Jock a long time I shouldn't have known what to think, but I was quite used to his p'etend by this, so I seeked for anything that would do. It soon hove in sight.

It was a wheelbarrow.

Jock climbed in, and shouted, "All aboard?"

And I said, "Aye, aye, Cap'n."

Then we caught sight of Madeline's mother walking along the path, so I scrambled out and brought her on board too. She sat down on my lap, and made rumbles in her inside.

We hauled up the anchor, and hoisted the sails, and the voyage began. We sailed to foreign climbs. Foreign climbs are other lands. We had lots of 'ventures. We kept a good look out for pirates, and when the weather turned colder we sighted icebergs. Then an awful storm arose. The wind shrieked in the rigging, and the waves were tremenjus. The ship rocked and trembled all over. This was caused by Jock banging 'bout first on one side and then on the other. He told me to cling to the shrouds. The shrouds are the sides of the barrow. Madeline's mother stopped rumbling, and didn't seem to like it.

At last one wave larger than the others was too much for us. The whole barrow—I mean the whole ship—

turned over, and threw us out on the ground—at least into the water. I fell on the grass, and Jock on the path. Madeline's mother didn't fall at all. She made one jump and got clear on to her feet, but she made more fuss than anybody. She stood with her back made into a bridge, and her tail as stiff as a poker, and swelled up bigger than three tails. Then she gave a big spit and yowl and rushed into the bushes, and we didn't see her any more.

I never cried if it could be helped when playing with Jock. He didn't like it. It was a pity if one was hurt, but it was all in the day's work, and one must take it quietly. That was what Jock said. So I was going to get up, and say nothing 'bout it when he shouted—

"Swim, mate, swim for your life to the jolly boat."

We swam to the barrow which was upside down, and climbed up. Jock grabbed the wheel, and brought the nose of the boat to the waves or we should have been swamped in another moment.

"An awfully narrow squeak, maty," he said squeeging the water out of his trowsers. "I don't know that I ever had a closer in all my 'sperience. Are all the crew drowned but you and me?—Oh, Dollie! I've dropped the compass. What will Alan say!"

"I've got it," I said. "I saw where it fell. It's not hurt."

Jock grabbed it. "You are a brick, Dollie—I'm no end obliged, mate. You shall be promoted as soon as ever we get home again. Would you like a pannikin of gin, or a drop of grog?"

Grog sounded more int'resting, so I said that would suit, and we tossed it off.

Soon after we reached land, and had 'ventures with

bears, and Jock got a frost bitten arm, and I had to rub it with some snow till it was saved.

Then he said we had reached the region of everlasting snow, and the glare from the sun was so blinding we must put on shades. He tied one shade of brown paper round his face, and one round mine, so we could see nothing but the ground for a tiny bit in front.

I didn't want to do this way, but Jock wanted to see how the compass would work. He said 'course we knew the way to the North Pole, and could find it by ourselves, but if we tied up our faces, and could only see the compass if we held it against our chests, and just enough of the ground to know we weren't walking into danger it would be grand, and we could find out if the thing really did point straight.

So we held hands, and Jock kept the compass close against him and followed wherever the hand pointed when we could. Sometimes a hedge came in the way, and we had to walk along till we got round it, and then follow the pointer again. This was very int'resting and rather frightening, 'cause I could not quite trust that little compass in spite of Jock being so sure.

Other times we met people and they laughed and said, "Whatever is the game now?" and when we told them we were looking for the North Pole they laughed again, and said we had as good a chance of finding it as anyone, 'specially if we went to work that way.

"Jock," I said at last. "Don't you think we must have got past it somehow? We seem to have been walking for hours."

Jock said he was 'fraid the compass must have gone wrong or something, but we would try a short time more and then give it u. So we walked till we came to a step, and someone said:

"Hullo! Jock, where are you off to? Don't run into

It was Mr. Alan, and 'stead of getting to the lawn we had come a diff'rent way and were in a summer house.

Cecil was there, too.

#### CHAPTER XXII

#### CECIL'S PRINCE

"What's the matter?" asked Mr. Alan.

Jock asplained. It took a long time. At the end Mr. Alan said, "Ah! very nice!"

Now, what Jock had been talking 'bout wasn't very nice at all. He was saying how the compass hadn't led us to the North Pole, and when he finished by asking, "Why didn't it, Alan?" what was the use of Mr. Alan's saying. "Ah! very nice!"

It wasn't any use.

Grown ups often do this kind of thing. They let one talk and talk, and at the end they don't know a bit, and p'etend they do.

Then Mr. Alan said to Cecil, "Shall we tell them?"

Cecil squeeged her hands tightly together. "We might as well. I hope they won't mind—I do hope they won't mind."

"Jock," said Mr. Alan, "how would you like a sister?"

Jock thinked. "I don't b'lieve I'd much care—'less p'rape Dollie."

"I can't give you Dollie, old man. It's out of the question, but how would you like Cecil?"

Jock said, "Oh!" Then he looked at me, and said, "Oh!" again. I said "Oh!" too. There didn't seem to be anything else to say.

"Don't you understand, old chap?" asked Mr. Alan. "I have asked Cecil to marry me, and she has said, 'yes'."

"Oh!" said Jock again. "So you've made up your minds at last, have you? It's all right, Alan. I told Dollie about it long ago, and she gave leave. She didn't want to at first, but she gave in. It's all right."

"But don't forget the 'ditions, Jock."

"'Course not. I don't forget promises. You shall have your choice of my pets, Dollie, but not Rex, and not Trip, you know."

"But there was a 'portanter thing than that, Jock."

"I know. Alan, you'll let Dollie come and stay with us for long visits, won't you? I promised to beg hard. 'Cause you know Miss Cecil b'longed to her, and she didn't want to give her up."

Cecil had been growing rosier and rosier.

Mr. Alan was red too. "Who on earth has been talking to you children?"

"No one, Alan. Only I told Dollie. I knew you wanted to be Miss Cecil's prince long ago, 'cause you did the same kind of things as Cousin Ned did when he was a lady's prince. Things like—"

Mr. Alan got redder than afore. "Spare me, Jock!" he said. He laughed though.

I climbed on Cecil's lap and put my arms round her neck, and my face close against her cheek. "But Jock hasn't said the 'portantest thing of all, Cis."

"I haven't forgotten, Dollie," said Jock.

"He has faithfully, faithfully promised that you won't love him more than me. Oh, Cecil, don't! I've always been your little one and pet. Cecil, promise you'll love me best. I don't mind 'bout Mr. Alan. He's a big man, and p'raps will want more, but Jock isn't much bigger than me—not very mnch, Cis. Do, do promise, darling Cecil."

"She doesn't mind you loving me a lot, you know, Miss Cecil," said Jock anshusly. "I hope you will. Only not best. I promised, you know."

Cecil was as rosy as she could be, but she hugged me and whispered, "Of course not, my pet. You are a little goose!"

"I wouldn't ever have consented, Cecil," I whispered, "only Jock said you were bound to have a prince some day, and you might do worse than have Mr. Alan."

Mr. Alan laughed a good deal, and Cecil shaked.

"You might even have had Mr. Dalton, and he is such a bounder I was 'bliged to give in. Oh, Cecil! why did you want a prince at all?"

Mr. Alan patted my arm softly. His eyes were very kind. "Won't you forgive me, little one, and let me be your brother? Don't you think you could like me as well as Dick some day?"

"I like you better than Dick," I said sadly. "Dick and I aren't friends. He was shamefully mean, and didn't stand by Cecil at all the night of the act."

Cecil smiled. "Dollie has never properly forgiven him, I'm afraid."

- "Alan's an awfully nice brother, Dollie," said Jock.
  "You might be pleasant about it."
  - " Has your heart ache quite gone, Mr. Alan?"
- "Nearly, Dollie. It would be well if you would consent. Give me a kiss, girlie, and let us be friends."

I hid my face against Cecil. "I won't be mean, I won't be mean, Cecil, but I don't want to kiss him. You were mine, you know."

Cecil squeeged softly, and Mr. Alan was very kind. "I understand. Poor little girl! It's a horrid pain, isn't it. Dollie?"

We sat still in sadness for a little while, then lock pulled at my dress. "I say, Dollie, we've forgotten all about the North Pole. Come along."

"I don't think I want to. I don't feel to care 'bout North Poles."

"Oh, but we must! We said we'd do it. It will never do to give in just 'cause things go wrong."

It wouldn't do for Jock to think me not fair. 'Sides it didn't do any good not to look for it even though Mr. Alan was Cecil's prince. And if we gave up we should be no better than the other asplorers who had come back 'cause it was too cold for them, or they hadn't been able to find it, or something. So I slid to the ground, and said I was ready.

"Alan, please show me about this compass, will you? asked Jock. "How do I hold it? Oh! keep it straight, must I? All right! Are you ready, Dollie?"

He picked up the paper shields, and was putting his on when he stopped, and turned rather red.

"I say, Alan, I ought to 'gratulate you, oughtn't I?"

"You ought, old chap."

"And-Alan-it-it won't make any difference to our being chums, will it?"

"Not a bit, Jock. I trust we are chums for life."

lock shook hands. He was pleased. Then he hugged Mr. Alan's arm.

"I'm ready, Dollie. Come along."

I took the shield, and stared at them both.

"Well, anyhow," I said, "I'm glad it's not that bounder. After this we had a very nice time at Sunnyside. Cecil and Mr. Alan went out a lot together, and they always let Jock and me come. When they sat on the hills we played 'bout, and when they went in a boat we fished. Mr. Alan bought a beaut'ful yacht atween Jock and me, and we sailed it in the sea when they sat on the sands and talked. It seems very naughty to say it, but it is much more int'resting to go out with a Cecil, and a Mr. Alan, and a Jock, than with a father and a mother.

When father was quite well again we went home. There was a lot of work to be done. Cecil said though she didn't mean to be married for quite a long time, still she might as well get some sewing done, so she made lovely tablecloths, and doilies, and mats, and many other things. I wanted to do something for her too, but there are so few things a little girl can do. Mother said what did I think of dusters, but they are so very dis'greeable to hem.

So I asked Cecil one day what did she think would be a nice present for a little girl to make for a grown up sister who was going to be married, only it wasn't to be for a long time yet. And Cecil said well, she didn't know. Dusters were 'bout as useful as anything, but then they were nasty to make. She said many people would work tea cloths and counterpanes, and pretty things, but there weren't many who loved anyone enough to make dusters. 'Course I loved Cecil more than anything, so I didn't say any more 'cept just to 'vise her not to buy any till near the time 'cause some one might.

They were horrid to do, but I worked hard and mother turned the corners, and I felt quite proud when one was done, and another half, all but a bit. Then there was nearly a sad accident. I was 'miring them one day

when Cecil was out, and never heard the front door bang, and she came straight into the room. I scrambled them up in a hurry.

"Oh, Cecil! did you see what they were? The s'prise will be quite spoilt."

I was nearly ready to cry.

Cecil said, "Hush, Dollie! hide it! quick! Here's mother. You may put it in my drawer till she goes."

This made me laugh in a whisper. She thought it was a bookmarker I was making for mother's birthday, with "Remember me," on it in blue silk.

Cecil wrote heaps of letters to Mr. Alan, and I sent messages to Jock, and he sent them to me. And Cecil told me that they would both spend Christmas with us, so I put all the days on a piece of paper and crossed one out every night. Cecil liked to see me do it.

I told Fanny Danvers and the doctor's Bessie 'bout Jock, and showed them some of his games. They were very int'rested, but somehow the games weren't as nice as when Jock played them. Why was this? I promised that when Jock came on the visit I would beg mother to ask them to tea, so that we might have fine fun together.

At last the day came when they were to arrive. They were to come in the evening, and the day was longer than two put together. When it was time to go to the station the wind blew, and the snow snowed till mother said if she were Cecil she wouldn't run the risk of taking a bad cold at the beginning of the visit, and she was sure Mr. Alan wouldn't 'spect her. Cecil said, "Very well!" and put on a nice dress, and put a nice one on me, and we sat by the fire. She said I needn't say Mr. to Mr. Alan any more, 'cause he was to be a brother like Dick.

It sounded silly to think of saying Mr. Dick.

The fire was very warm and blazy, and when the wind

blew harder Cecil poked it, and hoped they wouldn't be frozen.

Then came a bang at the front door. Cecil jumped up. It is very queer, but when one has been wanting and wanting some one to come, and that someone has come and is standing in the passage outside all the want goes, and one feels hot and cold, and frightened, and daren't go out and say, "How do you do? I hope you are quite well."

Cecil felt this way too. I had hold of her hand and it was trembly and shaky, and her cheeks were first red and then pale, and her eyes shone like stars.

Then the door opened, and Mr. Alan walked in. He took two or three big strides, and lifted Cecil right in his arms.

I ran away, and hid ahind a chair. Cecil says this is a very silly trick, and I must get over it. She says what would I think if she and mother hid ahind chairs when people came. This is a thing which cannot be 'magined. Cecil says it is 'cause I am thinking more 'bout myself than how to make my visitors happy. This sounds very selfish, but it is so diff'cult not to think more 'bout oneself than anyone else. One is with oneself all the time, and with the others only sometimes.

Jock came running in. He was never shy. As soon as he caught sight of me he said, "Hullo! Dollie. Isn't this snow grand? I thought of a new game as we were coming in the train."

I forgot 'bout being shy. "Have you? Tell me. I'm just aching for a new game, Jock."

"Old chap," said Mr. Alan. "Come and shake hands with Cecil. Well, little Dollie-girl, how are you?"

He sat down and put his arm round me. His eyes were just as kind as ever. I climbed on his knee, and

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whispered, "I want to ask something, Mr. Alan—at least, I mean Alan, athout the Mr.—have you come to take Cecil away?"

"Not a bit of it, little one. Not for a long time yet."

I was very glad, so kissed him, and hoped he had had a 'greeable journey, and said he was very welcome, and I trusted he was in good health, and all the perlite things father and mother say.

Then he and Cecil sat down to talk, and Jock and I dragged our stools in front of the fire and whispered softly.

"Dollie, aren't you glad after all that Alan wanted to be Cecil's prince? Think how horrid it would have been if we had had to say 'Goodbye' at Sunnyside, and never seen each other again. Now we can be chums for ever."

"Yes," I said rather sadly. "But, you know, Jock—I'm not meaning to be nasty—only, you know, I love Cecil more than anyone else, and she was all mine once."

"'Course! But, Dollie, she was bound to have a prince some time, and it might have been one who wouldn't let you and me be chums."

"I hoped when Cecil said some of the nicest ladies never married that she wouldn't, 'cause she is truly the nicest of all."

"I know she is. Alan says so, and he ought to know. But, Dollie, do be glad that we can be chums for life. I want to badly. Say it, Dollie! Say you are glad. Alan says you shall come for long visits, and I can come and visit you. It's really nice if only you'd think so. And Cecil wouldn't like Alan not to be her prince now, and Alan says she is the sweetest princess a man ever had. Everybody likes it but you, Dollie. Do say "Chums for life, 'Dollie."

I peeped at Cecil and Alan. They were talking. I made up my mind that things might have been much worse, and, anyhow, there was this good thing that Jock and I could be chums for life.

THE END

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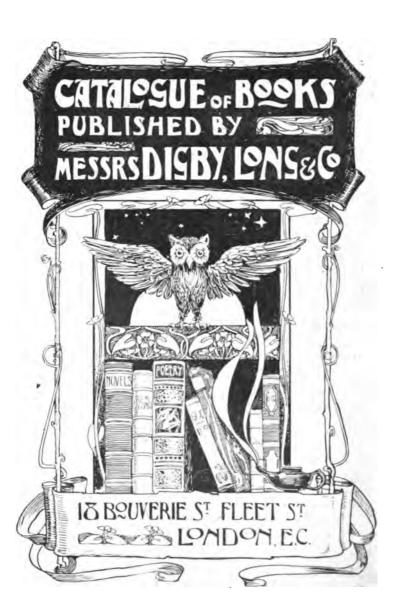
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